

A MINISTRY MODEL DESIGNED TO EDUCATE  
AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN ON MAKING  
BETTER RELATIONSHIP CHOICES

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **A MINISTRY MODEL DESIGNED TO EDUCATE AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN ON MAKING BETTER RELATIONSHIP CHOICES**

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The context of this project was Central Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church located in Detroit, Michigan. This project educated and informed African American women on making better relationship choices. A mixed method research approach consisting of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques shaped the data collection process. Based on the research data collected women believed they were educated and informed on making better relationship choices as a result of the information shared during project implementation.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I thank God for leading me on this journey, keeping me focused, helping me through this process. I thank my daughter Karissa Mia Church and my niece Imani Zoe Hill for being beautiful God fearing young women. This process was enjoyable because of your supportive attitudes. I thank my United Theological Seminary mentors Bishop Millicent Hunter, Bishop J. Derrick Johnson, and Dr. David A. Rusk for your work, patience, guidance, and care throughout this journey. I appreciate my father Reverend Milton R. Hill Sr. and mother Priscilla Hill for your wisdom and guidance throughout this journey. I thank my professional associates: Dr. Lynda Wood for your help, wisdom, and support, God always has a ram in the bush. Reverend Dr. Patricia Havis, Reverend Dr. Faith A. Allen, Reverend Dr. Philip D. and Reverend Dr. Alandra Washington, thank you for your contributions and support. I would also like to thank Mrs. Gloria Hunt and Ms. Brenda Johnson for your help editing this dissertation. A special thanks to my peer group Futuring: Effective Change and Transition for the 21st Century Church and to my peer associate Karen Johnson.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my daughter Karissa Mia Church and niece Imani Zoe Hill and pray the Lord continues to bless our relationships. May this work bless my sisters and brothers Katrina L. Griffin, Penne Hill, Blaze (Shanna) Hill, Clarissa Hill, Milton R. Hill Jr., Cornelius Hill, Moses Hill, Bob Hill, and all of my nieces, nephews and friends. I dedicate this dissertation to all bishops, pastors, elders, reverends, deacons, ministers, and church leaders. I also dedicate this work to all of the women and men who believe that relationships can still bless lives and be healthy.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CME	Christian Methodist Episcopal
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

## INTRODUCTION

This ministry model is designed to educate women on making better relationship choices and has laid a positive foundation for building healthy Christian courting relationships for the participants of this study as well as the researcher as supported by the data presented within this research document.

Chapter One presents the reason for the ministry model and the spiritual journey that led to my interest in courting relationships is thoroughly investigated. The synergy between my spiritual journey, the context, and the hypothesis of this project is described and introduced.

Chapter Two discusses the biblical perspectives used to sustain this ministry model from Ruth 3:1--6 and Titus 2:1--5. The Old Testament scripture in Ruth 3:1--6 is used to inform us that since the biblical days mature women, as a custom, have trained and groomed younger women in terms of courtship practices, as well as mate selection. According to Titus 2:3--5, Paul advises Titus to have the older women train the younger women. "Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self--controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God."<sup>1</sup> We are able to look at these biblical examples of who trained whom during the biblical days.

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<sup>1</sup> Titus 2:4-5 (New International Version).

Chapter Three describes the historical foundations of this research concerning the history of relationships in American as well as in the African American community are reviewed and evaluated. One learns how African Americans formed relationships and married during slavery times and the various influences these past practices may have on our current courting practices. In summary, there were challenges in terms of when slaves wanted to marry other slaves. African American relationships were interfered with by their slave masters and were not often recorded or respected. Other issues addressed in this chapter include: due to the books, plays, music, movies, and other outside influences marriages are now at an all--time low, and our dating culture has shifted into various unhealthy directions due to various negative outside influences.

Chapter Four provides various theological perspectives on why pneumatology is the theology used to support this project. Explored was the role and work of the Holy Spirit. In regards to the work of the Holy Spirit, Vickers states, “through prayer and help from the Holy Spirit together these new ministries and our churches was able to work together for the good of God’s people serving them and administering the sacraments” and becoming one unified body in Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup> Vickers explains this as “incorporation into the Trinitarian life of God”.<sup>3</sup> With help from the Holy Spirit, believers are able to turn away from the sin that is producing negative relationships in our communities. It is

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<sup>2</sup> Jason E. Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 73-99.

<sup>3</sup> Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground*, 101-107.

through our relationship with Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit that we receive contentment and fulfillment. The ministry model will inform, but it is the Holy Spirit that will bring about the change.

Chapter Five theoretical supports provides information on any existing ministry models or other resources that will support or inform the design of the ministry model implemented at Central CME Church. Although the need for companionship is something many people desire, there are exceptions, we do not always set the proper foundation for our relationships to be positive, safe, honest, and a blessing for all parties involved. In view of the negative state of many of our African American relationships, there is a need for us to revisit some relationship practices that have worked in the past. New relationship strategies are considered in this chapter because of the shifts that have taken place specifically within our African American culture. You can only do what you know or what you have seen modeled we are limited by our experience. Increasing awareness and offering positive Christian courtship strategies should result in singles obtaining healthier relationships.

Chapter Six identifies the methodology used to implement this ministry model. Charts, graphs, survey results and questions have been provided to show project design and feedback from the participants of this study. How the data supports the hypothesis of this ministry model, lessons learned and considerations for future work also has been noted.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

Throughout the years God has used instruction and teaching through the Holy Spirit and various messengers to inform, shape and instill commandments, statutes, morals, values and to direct people in terms of how they are to live this life in a way that is pleasing to God. Women for generations have passed various lessons, traditions, tips, and moral values down to younger women as a way of preserving valued culture and tradition. Because of the cultural values passed down from mature women to the younger women, generation--to--generation our divorce rates were lower, sexually transmitted diseases were at an all--time low, courtship, and dating lead to more marriages, and the number of single parent homes was lower.

In the past our families where both parents were present, crimes committed by children, teens and young adults was much lower than it is today especially in the City of Detroit and other large urban communities. These are just a few of the reasons the quest to learn how to build healthy courting relationships are of interest. It is through our courting relationships that the progression to deeper relationships develops. When these relationships lack the proper foundation, purpose, and direction, many problems can develop if the relationship continues. When these courting relationships do not develop under healthy conditions, we begin to see the breakdown of the family unit, and number of healthy relationships. Based on the number of problems that have developed in our

courting or dating relationships one will agree there is a need to educate and inform our community on the art of building healthy relationships. Due to time constraints with this study educating and informing women on making better courting relationship choices will be the focus of this project.

Some reflections regarding my life and family background to deepen ones understanding of my journey: I grew up the second oldest of nine children in a nuclear family in the inner city of Detroit, Michigan to Milton and Priscilla Hill. There is a ten--year gap between the first four and the second group of five siblings. The family consists of four boys and five girls.

I remember consistently attending church and was baptized at the age of fifteen even though I believed Jesus Christ and God existed all of my life. I have never doubted God's existence or the fact that the Lord created everything in the heavens and the earth as the Bible states. It was at St. John that I participated in many of the church activities, Sunday school, Christian Youth Fellowship activities and participating in the morning worship services by reading the announcements and welcoming new visitors.

My formative religious experience was growing up in a house of believers in Jesus Christ. I believe that as long as a person believes that Jesus Christ in accordance with Romans 10: 8--10, and 13, he/she will be saved as it states in the Bible. In terms of religions, there are many according to what one may prefer, but the true principles to live by are listed in the Bible. I have always believed this way.

As a youth, my siblings and I did not get along with some of my relatives. Some were fine and some would often say negative things to my siblings and I. This just serves as a note to say I was used to being set apart in some way or another. Being singled out in

a negative way has made me very sensitive to the way I treat others. I enjoyed fellowship with my mother's relatives. They were often positive and always treated us very well. As a young person, I was a loner and did not talk very much. In school, I was quiet and always received ones in citizenship. I enjoyed learning and always tried to do my best.

I attended Henry Ford High School in Detroit, Michigan where I was placed in the Alpha Honors Program. The program was designed to keep the same students together from ninth through twelfth grade, offering a college preparatory curriculum with advanced math, science, and college courses. The program started with twenty--four students in the Alpha group; who took all of our classes together. No other students were allowed to take courses with us. By the time we graduated, twelve students remained in the program. Professionally all of my classmates have gone on to college, and have two or more advanced degrees. They are all doing well in their fields of study with the major areas being accounting, medicine, science, and engineering.

In the ninth through the twelfth grade, I was able to obtain a position working in the office because I did not like going to the lunchroom. There was no order in the lunchroom, and I did not want to be in an environment that was not under control. While working in the office, I was able to gain favor with a couple of key secretaries Ms. Burke, who was the head secretary, Ms. Mack and Ms. Cosner. The women liked the work I did for them and how I conducted myself as a young responsible teenager. They talked to the night school Principal Mr. Courvell and asked him to hire me as one of the night school secretaries. Mr. Courvell gave me a short interview and hired me. I worked every day after school and enjoyed my new position which I held until I graduated from Henry Ford High School. I was not in the Co--op Program but was given one of their positions in the

office. Once in a while, the business teacher in charge of the Co--op program would complain that I held this position but the decision was up to the night school principal, and he liked my work ethic and was not going to release me based on this conflict. It was at this job that I learned how to type proficiently, format letters, memos, process transcript request, register students for night classes, filing, and the proper way to answer the telephone etc. With the money, I earned from this job I would often contribute the majority of it to the household to help with groceries and other household items.

I attended Tennessee State University after graduating from high school for one year and attended a CME church while in Tennessee. Staff at St. John CME Church recommended the church to me because I would no longer be able to attend. The next two years I attended Michigan State University. While attending Michigan State University I was the Black Caucus President of Rather Hall. I served in this capacity for a couple of quarters until I passed the position to someone else. One of the things I did not like about Michigan State was the large general education classes. There would be over one hundred students in a class. Everyone would just sit and listen to the lecture whether we understood what the professor was teaching or not. Oftentimes we would not even have notes provided from the professor but would be expected to perform on an exam. Oftentimes I would have to go to the labs that were set--up to get questions answered. I went to make sure I understood what to study for the exams. I left Michigan State after two or three years because I could not come up with the money to cover tuition. I also did not do very well with the large class sizes.

The next semester I transferred to the University of Detroit Mercy and graduated in 1995. During the time that I attended the University of Detroit Mercy I started working



full time as an accountant before I graduated because of the demand for accountants. The University of Detroit--Mercy gave me the best mix of grants, scholarships, and loans necessary to complete my education. I earned a BSBA with a concentration in Accounting from U of D Mercy and an MBA in Finance from Davenport University. During my time in college, I met many wonderful people and was able to dispel many stereotypes learned about different types of people while growing up in the inner city of Detroit. The University of Detroit--Mercy and Davenport University offered small class sizes. I enjoyed attending these universities. My college experience was very positive, I worked hard and learned a lot of things about people and my profession as a finance professional.

After graduating from college, I was married and divorced after two years of marriage and began my life as a single mother to my daughter Karissa who was two--years old at the time. During our marriage and courtship, I knew my ex--husband was not a good match for me. Some of our expectations were different in terms of what we both expected in marriage. Our view of marriage and what we observed our parents model while growing up was different. For example, his mother did not work outside of the house and cooked often for the family. We both worked outside of the home but because I was an accountant, I oftentimes worked longer hours than he did. He did not know how to cook very well and believed it was my job to do all of the cooking because his mother did. What I learned from this experience is to ensure that I consider relationships where our expectations are similar, along with our spiritual and moral beliefs.

During my journey as a divorced single mother, I have met countless women with a similar testimony. Many women would often share their difficulty with their

relationships with me, and I would offer them advice. I attended a mega church in my community and from that experience, I met a lot of wonderful men and women with whom I became good friends. Relationships were often our topic of choice as we would learn how to make better choices in our personal relationships.

I studied my Bible almost daily depending on my circumstances as I raised my daughter and also my niece who was the same age as my daughter. I started raising my niece when she and my daughter were both in the first grade. Both girls are freshmen in college this year.

I had many questions, and I wanted to know what the Bible said about them. It got to the point where I cannot go a long period of time without reading God's Word. It became like a hunger that is only satisfied after I spend various amounts of time getting questions answered from God's Word. The way that I understand this hunger is by saying God caught me peaking in His Word and took me. Years ago, as a teen I started reading God's Word and at first, it was a little difficult to understand the King James version. As I continued to go to Bible study, I began to understand. I prayed for wisdom and understanding of God's Word and he began to give me wisdom and understanding. This is the very reason I make a focused effort not to commit certain sins and to follow God's commandments and statutes. God holds us accountable for what we know. In addition, we perish for what we do not know according to scripture.

In terms of my successes and failures, I have experienced in the ministry and lessons learned they are summarized as follows: Continue to have faith and believe in the Word of God and Jesus Christ. Follow the Lord's commandments and statutes, forgive, and walk in love with everyone. Do not take people or situations personally. Always do

the best you can and leave the rest to God. When we apply these ideas to support our relationships I believe they will be healthier. How one perceives a situation makes a big difference in the outcome.

Currently, I attend and serve on the ministerial staff at Hamlet Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME) as a Local Deacon. With help and direction from the Holy Spirit the Lord has given me a strong interest in finding ways to improve our courting practices and inform our communities of such so that our relationships are healthy, and benefit all parties even any children born or unborn. I seek to understand and inform our community of what has changed about our courting or dating practices that we now have so many single parent homes? Why do we have a high rate of sexually transmitted diseases in our community? Why do we have so many who practice copulation before marriage? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us correct our courting relationships and how do we learn how to listen? What are the signs that the Holy Spirit is leading one's life versus not? Are just a few of the questions I have wondered over the years. When we are in a relationship with the right person the interaction is wonderful. Both people are able to benefit from the relationship in different ways.

My personal journey has led me to this research topic because many of my single sisters and I who desire healthy relationships or to be married but have found it difficult to meet men who share similar life goals, philosophy, expectations, moral, and spiritual beliefs. This topic is of great importance across many age groups. I also believe in God's timing and plan for one's life in terms of whether it is in God's plan for one to meet one's significant other or not. Sometimes the Lord may have some work for a person to do first.

There may be some healing that needs to take place before one can move forward into new relationships. Sometimes it just may not be the Lord's plan for one's life but with either decision, God will equip one for the journey.

### **Context**

Central CME Church has received a steady increase in church membership for the past two years. All age groups are represented at Central from newborn babies to senior citizens. The ratio between males and females is about 40% male and 60% female. Central's population is about 65% senior citizens and a 35% mixture of all other age groups. Most of the members who attend Central or live in the surrounding community are African Americans. From a poll taken at Central, it was determined that there is a large single's population who desire to learn how to build healthy courting relationships or be married. Within this group is a large number of single parent homes. I also noted that whenever the topic of discussion is on relationships many of the members are positive, excited, and want to talk about the state of their relationships and what to do to make our relationships better. Members of Central CME Church welcome new members and enjoy fellowship with one another. The church grounds are well maintained and the sanctuary is beautiful because of the new red carpeting throughout the church as well as the polished wood. When one enters the church the environment is peaceful and has plenty of rooms for various ministries to be hosted at the same time. These are a few reasons why I chose to implement the ministry model at Central CME Church.

As Christians, we are to embrace all of God's people even though they may be different from us. A church often needs to develop ministries that provide an atmosphere

of love and supports the needs of members and the surrounding community and Central has been doing a wonderful job at this task with its many ministries. Central has ministries in place that teach members how to develop a relationship with Jesus Christ, as well as treat all believers with love and respect no matter how old or young they are, especially our teens and children. Central has found a way to ensure that they are ministering to the needs of all members.

Another reason for choosing Central CME as the church to implement this project is I had the pleasure of attending another women's fellowship at Central CME Church the year before I implemented this project. All of the women who attended were very positive and friendly. The ministry opened with prayer, and then began some wonderful icebreakers designed for the women to get to know each another. One icebreaker required each member to say one word that she felt represented her along with her name. The woman next to her would then have to repeat all of the members' preceding names and the words they chose to identify themselves. I found the icebreaker to be fun and challenging. The woman who joined the group last had the difficult task of remembering everyone's name who had come in before her. After the first person had re-introduced herself, while the other women followed suit with the exercise. It was interesting to hear the various descriptors the women used to describe themselves. I learned from this activity that I can remember names. We discussed the story of Ruth. During one session the group came up with some wonderful insights regarding the story of Ruth and its life application today.

Central has reliable security and is in a clean urban environment. Members are not concerned about their safety or cars during worship services. Central has developed other

ministries. For example, a men's ministry and other ministries that support the family and other issues some families may be currently facing. While attending various programs at Central CME it was observed that the ministerial leadership also needed to develop ways to teach the membership how to develop healthy courting relationships. There are a number of single parent families as well as members living together with their significant other, unmarried. I am grateful to the pastor of Central CME Church who agreed to allow me to host this singles' ministry model at this location. The pastor of Central is also one of my mentors for this project and seeing that she just completed her doctoral work at United Theological Seminary made it a great situation for me having to complete a similar ministry model to satisfy the needs for this project.

I grew up attending St. John CME Church and left after graduating from high school. While attending college out of state I attended a near by CME Church identified by staff at St. John CME. Upon returning, back to Michigan, I then started attending Word of Faith Christian Center in Southfield, Michigan a mega church. I came back to a mega church in my community because at the time they had the most attractive ministries and many in my age group were attending one of these popular churches. It was not until I answered the call into ministry that I returned to the CME church because they have an organized way of training people for ministry. I attended Grace CME for three years where my father and I were assigned in ministry until I was assigned to assist in ministry at Hamlett Temple CME where the pastor was appointed the wonderful task of training ministers for work in ministry for our district.

The skills and interest I bring to Central CME are the zest to learn and teach the Word of God to others. I enjoy developing ministry models designed to teach women and

singles how to develop healthy relationships or courting practices to lay a positive foundation for healthy Christian relationships. I also seek to live by God's commandments and statutes because I love the way God blesses God's children. I seek to make sure that I am a wonderful example of the way the Lord tells us we should conduct ourselves. I make a focused effort to love, be kind, patient, and understanding with people. Sometimes this can be very difficult depending on the circumstances but we must learn how to love the unlovable. I would never suggest that one should marry this type of person but we must figure how to get along with them in the work place, or church for example. There is long life, prosperity, and many blessings associated with being obedient to God's commandments and statutes according to many scriptures.

Other skills and interest I bring to ministry include teaching the Word of God and applying it to everyday life. I enjoy presenting biblical concepts to a variety of people. I am an excellent administrator. I am also an excellent money manager and meticulous accountant. I am organized, kind, patient, caring, loving, deadline oriented, hardworking, and very pleasant to work with. At least that is what I am told quite often from coworkers, families, and church members.

I enjoy Sunday school because during this time not only are we discussing the lesson for a particular Sunday, but we are also given the opportunity to share practical ways to apply what we have learned in God's Word to our lives. We also have the opportunity to share a testimony with others about something we have experienced related to the lesson. These are inputs I have added while teaching the Sunday school lesson during my assignment at Grace CME Church. At Hamlet CME I currently teach

Bible study to the children of the church. They also enjoy sharing how they feel; and how they would apply Bible lessons learned to their lives.

I believe participating members enjoyed Bible study because they told me they enjoyed it and were willing to share so others could learn and become free. I also taught using a similar format while teaching Children's Church on third Sundays at Grace CME. I provided a service to the children during the service that consisted of reviewing various biblical stories and any lessons we are to learn from them. A snack was provided and the children had an opportunity to provide feedback and play games designed to enforce their memory of biblical events, and to make learning different aspects of the Bible fun and interesting. For example, one game I created was "Who knows the two greatest commandments?" There are Ten Commandments according to Exodus 20. The greatest commandment according to scripture: "Jesus replied love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind . . . This is the first and greatest commandment, and the second is like it; Love your neighbor as yourself". (Matt. 22:37--40). The first greatest commandment is rolled up in the first four commandments. The last six commandments are represented in the second greatest commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Rom. 13: 9--10). The game is played, by the children going to one side of the room and then they take steps to get to the other side of the room based on how many commandments they remember. The winner gets a prize. It is a fun way to teach the Ten Commandments to children. Before the activity is started, the teacher explains what the Ten Commandments are, the purpose and what to do if they break one.

Other skills that I possess are to focus on being at peace with others as much as possible and be quick to forgive offenses. To love one another and forgive is what the



Lord wants us to do although depending on the situation can be difficult to do. Some reasons that I always keep in mind when I have to forgive someone else is to be reminded that if I want the Lord to forgive me of my sins I must forgive others. I also do not know the reason someone chooses to act a certain way but the Lord knows the full story and has asked that we forgive one another. I believe the ability to forgive releases us to move forward toward what the Lord has for the rest of our lives. If I am not able to forgive that affects my love walk with others, my prayers, and my relationship with God. Not being able to love and forgive will also continue to hurt my relationships. Being able to attract relationships does not mean one will be able to maintain a healthy relationship if one is not able to love and forgive. I also know that vengeance is the Lord's and God can chastise someone far better than any other person can. I am also comforted by the fact that "You reap what you sow" according to (Galatians 6:7). In due season, in God's timing you will reap what you sow. I know these things to be true because they are in God's Word. Why do I need to hold on to anything, be angry about anything, or be in a state of un--forgiveness? People can learn a lot from others just by observing how one may respond to various situations.

Another support for this project comes from a love to read various self--help books, motivational materials and magazines addressing different issues relevant in today's society including relationships. I also enjoy reading the various books of the Bible and seeing what the Word of God says about different events or issues taking place today and sharing this information with others. I enjoy reading various aspects and subjects dealing with the Bible by different writers. I do not prefer reading fiction. My preference is non--fiction. I have a special interest in the preservation of the family and

building healthy relationships. All aspects of this topic are very important. I believe the most important relationship is a relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship will enable the Holy Spirit to dwell and work within us. The second most important relationship is the family and true friendships. I enjoy reading materials that address this subject as well as prayer and accessing other promises from the Word of God.

The topic of building healthy relationships is also important because I experienced divorce in my first marriage. In God's timing, and if it is God's plan I will marry again and prayerfully will not make the same mistakes. A couple has to have similar: moral values, expectations for the relationship, belief system, and spiritual beliefs in order to begin to lay a positive foundation for healthy courtship. Both parties pasts and family life must be considered and discussed. Learning from my past has helped inform this Doctor of Ministry Project.

In terms of my personal courting philosophy used to inform this project I believe in courtship, where the man takes the lead as directed by God, and involves friendship, similar expectations, moral values, prayer and a couple jointly believing in Jesus Christ as well as submitting to God's commandments and statutes as a lifestyle. The couple should be employed and should be a blessing or a benefit to one another as well as having purpose. The couple should be able to talk about sensitive issues as the relationship becomes deeper meaning moving toward marriage to include information regarding their financial information, sexual health, family planning etc. These are just some of the actions needed to support the start of a strong healthy relationship. I believe what the Bible states about relationships "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with

darkness?” according to 2 Corinthians 6:14. The Lord wants us to minister to the lost but not choose them as mates. I have also counseled many women and men on their relationships and have been told numerous times I should write a book on relationships or should go into counseling full time.

### **Synergy**

The topic I have explored through this Doctor of Ministry Project researches how the church can influence a culture of people who are quickly turning away from healthy Christian courting relationships back to fundamental ways of relating to one another according to how God has described relationships between men and women in the many accounts in the Bible. To focus the project, the hypothesis questioned whether women could become more educated and informed on the art of building healthy courting relationships based on information provided at focus group sessions. Mature women also had the opportunity to share their perspective with other women and teens during the focus group sessions on how to build healthy courting relationships and aligning these ideas with God’s Word.

Ministerial gifts and interest in this project have supported the needs of the women who participated in my focus group sessions at Central. Many of the women who participated in the focus group sessions stated that they felt more educated and informed in terms of their courting relationships. It was of interest to research ways to influence through the study of the Holy Spirit, use of prayer, scripture, kindness, love, forgiveness, modeling, teaching or leading by example with my own life how to develop healthy relationships; Healthy courting relationships that would stand the test of time against a

culture that is quickly turning away from love, and marriage as modeled in early Old Testament stories as detailed in Ruth.

Through the use of my ministry gifts, I was able to contribute some insights along with other women who attended the ministry model in terms of good courting relationship practices. The general nature, content, and focus of my Doctor of Ministry project addresses or creates ministries following a structure where women will teach younger women tried and tested tips on building healthy courting relationships. It is at this point that there is synergy of what I seek to learn as well as why I believe the Lord has led me to implement my project at Central.

What I wanted to accomplish through this Doctor of Ministry project is to help women as well as myself learn the art of building healthy courting relationships. Quite a few members of Central CME would like to acquire healthy companionship or courting relationships. Because of this ministry model, members of Central became more informed on the art of building healthy courting relationships.

Numerous women at Central CME have mastered the art of building healthy lasting relationships. Some of the women stated problems in their prior relationships, and the lessons learned from these experiences.

There were also some women attending the focus group meetings who have experienced some type of injury, pain, abuse or some other form of disappointment and are still receiving their healing from such an event. Some would ask the question why I have not addressed this aspect, which will affect the outcome of one's relationships? During a healing revival at Central, I heard expressions of the pain, frustration, anger or other reasons why forgiveness has not yet taken place in some women's lives. These old

damaged relationships prevent or hinder new or healthy relationships from growing or developing.

As a result of injury, we may not perceive a situation the same. In order to have successful relationships after experiencing broken relationships, we must heal and forgive the past in order to move on to a brighter future with help from the Holy Spirit. Without the proper healing and a new perception, we look at new relationships from the broken lens of our experience. We may not have healed completely and now we have triggers that we may not know we have until we are right in the middle of a situation. These issues have to be repaired and addressed in order for new relationships to succeed.

Unfortunately, we are not a culture that waits until we are healed to move forward into new relationships. For this reason, I will focus this doctoral project on educating women as well as myself on making better relationship choices as a way of improving the structure/culture of our relationships by creating a ministry model that will support women teaching younger women tried and tested tips on building healthy relationships. The built in processes of this ministry will promote healing and provide courting tips in terms of how to navigate oneself in a culture of people that may not always have one's best interest in mind while in the process of building healthy courting relationships.

In conclusion, I believe it is at Central CME Church that I am to learn and teach certain aspects of building healthy relationships. I will need to complete the pieces of the puzzle that will answer this question for many who desire healthy relationships during a time and age where the culture is promoting broken relationships as supposed to healthy Christian fellowships and courtships. It is at this point that there is a blessing for me as well as my context in terms of what the Holy Spirit has planned.

Looking at the divorce rate, the number of single parents, and deception one can encounter as a single woman to build healthy courting relationships today, one must follow God's commandments, pray and learn what God says concerning different issues encountered in this life. These practices along with repentance when required will activate God's protection and blessings in one's life. Living in an environment and culture where more and more people are selfish and not desiring wives or husbands as described by the Word of God but looking for sexual benefits outside of marriage is degrading and is hurting our culture, families and society.

Benefits of this ministry include healthy relationships and courtships being preferred again after women have been taught how to lay a healthy foundation. Women will know the components needed to build healthy relationships and will be able to side step or bypass relationships that are not healthy. Hopefully the number of single parent homes will decrease over time as a result of this ministry. The number of divorces will decrease as a result of this ministry. Our children, teens and overall families and relationships will be positive, God centered and healthy. This is a snap shot of the long-term vision of this ministry model. God's kingdom will continue to grow and expand as believers seek to walk in love and build healthy relationships.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Since the beginning of time, God has used prophets, and other messengers to provide blessings, protection, deliverance, and guidance to believers. God has used instruction and teaching through various messengers to inform, shape and instill commandments, statutes, morals, and values to direct people on how they are to live this life in a way that is pleasing to God. For generations, women have passed various lessons, traditions, tips, and moral values down to younger women as a way of preserving valued culture and tradition. As a result of the cultural values that were passed down from women to younger women generation to generation there was a time where divorce rates were lower, sexually transmitted diseases were at an all-time low, courtship and dating led to more marriages, and the number of single parent homes was lower. In the past families where both parents were present, the number of crimes committed by children, and teens was lower than it is today especially in the City of Detroit and other large urban communities.

The Old Testament scripture used to sustain this project is from Ruth 3:1--6. This scripture describes the relationship, instruction, and guidance shared between a woman, her daughter-in-law, and their faith in God. The combination of these events adds security to Ruth and Naomi's future and preserves the names of their deceased husbands and the name of Naomi's other son.

A brief description of the story that unfolds in Ruth is as follows: After the death of her husband and two sons Naomi along with her two daughter--in--laws return to the land of Judah after she heard “in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited His people by giving them food”<sup>1</sup> Ruth urged her daughter--in--laws to return to their parents (v.8). Orpah returned home (v.15). After pleading with Naomi, Ruth influenced Naomi to allow her to return with her to Bethlehem (vv. 17--19). Ruth told Naomi “Do not urge me to leave you or to turn back from you (v. 15). Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay (v. 15). Your people are my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16).

After Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem, Ruth asks Naomi “Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favor.” (Ruth 2:2). While Ruth is in the field picking grain, Boaz spots her and inquires about her to his harvesters (v.5). He then approached Ruth and told her not to glean in anyone else’s field and not to go away from there (v. 8). He told her to glean with the rest of the women and that he had informed the men not to touch her (v. 9). Boaz told Ruth where she could get water when she was thirsty (v. 9). Ruth asked Boaz why he was being so kind to her (v. 10). Boaz told her he heard about the way she treated her mother--in--law after the death of her husband (vv.11--12). Boaz later offered her some of the roasted grain he was eating (v.14). As Ruth left Boaz to continue to glean or pick grain in his fields, he ordered his men to “pull some extra stalks from the bundles” (Ruth 2:16) they had already picked to make it easier for her to collect (v. 16). Ruth told Naomi of Boaz’s kindness toward her and offered her some of the grain he had offered her earlier and

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth 1:6-7 (New Revised Standard Version ). All Biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV) unless otherwise indicated.



showed Naomi how much grain she was able to collect (vv. 18--19). Naomi knew Ruth had favor with Boaz and wanted her to marry again so that she and Naomi would be taken care of by Boaz. Naomi explained to Ruth "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you." (Ruth 3:1). Naomi teaches and advises Ruth exactly what to do to let Boaz know that she would like him to act as her guardian--redeemer. Naomi told Ruth to bathe, put on perfume, put on some nice clothes, note where Boaz was located on the threshing floor, wait until he had eaten and was full, and then discreetly lie at his feet and wait for his instructions. (vv. 3--4)

Boaz told Ruth to rest until morning before anyone else wakes (v.13). He gave her six measures of barley according to (Ruth 3:15). Ruth went back to Naomi and told her of everything Boaz said and did (vv. 16--17). She showed her the barley that Boaz had given her (v. 17). Naomi then advised Ruth not to do anything until Boaz handled the matter of becoming Ruth's guardian--redeemer (v. 18). Boaz knew there was another man who was entitled to be guardian--redeemer first and wanted to make sure he had an opportunity to decide whether he wanted to be the guardian redeemer (Ruth 4:4--5). The guardian redeemer declined and did not want to take Ruth as his wife (v. 6). Boaz then buys all of the land acquired by Elimelek, Naomi's dead husband and her two dead sons Kilion and Mahlon and takes Ruth as his wife "I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, to be my wife, to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance, in order that the name of the dead may not be cut off from his kindred and from the gate of his native place; today you are witnesses" (Ruth 4:10).

The New Testament scripture reviewed to sustain this project is from Titus 2:1--5. A brief description of the story that unfolds in Titus details how Paul has left Titus to put

churches in order, and assign elders to the areas where they have started new ministries in the City of Crete (Titus 1:5--6). Paul is not in jail at this time and is currently ministering to believers in another town. Paul also has given Titus a set of directions to follow as he is choosing the elders and setting up places where believers can come to worship (v. 6)

During this time, there is great sin among the people because they are not familiar with God's Law and statutes. Titus 2:1--15 over--all is setting a standard of living and values for older men, women, and younger men, and women. Paul instructed Titus to teach the older women "Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self--controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited" (Titus 2:3--5). Titus is instructed by Paul to share the standards laid out in the letter he wrote him with great passion. He also wanted Titus to rebuke anyone who spoke false doctrine to the people of Crete (Titus 1:10--11). Titus's job was to set up the church in Crete and train the people in the things of Jesus Christ until they are self--sufficient with their newly selected leadership or elders to carry out the established church without him (Titus 1--3). Once Titus is finished setting up the new church in Crete, Paul told him in the letter to meet him in the next town of Nicopolis if he is able (Titus 3:12).

There was a greater number of successful relationships in the past as a result, of women for generations passing various lessons, traditions, tips, and moral values down to younger women as a way of preserving valued culture and tradition. Women, teaching younger women tried and surveyed tips on courtship or dating, to build healthy

relationships for Christian fellowship, the focus of this Doctor of Ministry project the chosen pericopes from Ruth and Titus support how women during this time taught younger women how to build healthy relationships that either led to marriage as in Ruth's case or provided younger women guidance on how to preserve or conduct themselves in marriage as in Titus. In light of negative statistics facing African Americans in terms of current divorce rates, number of new HIV/AIDS cases, number of AIDS related deaths among African Americans, number of sexually transmitted diseases, and the alarming number of single parent homes it is evident that women need to return to the practice of training younger women on the art of building healthy relationships. Women should continue to train younger women in the art of building healthy relationships for Christian fellowship or that lead to marriage or the preservation of marriage as done during the biblical times.

In the upcoming sections of this report, each pericope supports the practice of women teaching younger women how to build healthy relationships for Christian fellowship, or courtship that leads to marriage. In the story of Ruth 3:1--6 Naomi wanted security for her daughter--in--law Ruth. Through Ruth's obedience to her mother--in--law's instruction and guidance, she will gain security through Boaz and be able to preserve the names of their dead husbands and Naomi's other son.

### **Old Testament Ruth**

The Old Testament pericope chosen to sustain this project is found in (Ruth 3:1--6). The passage is as follows:

Naomi her mother--in--law said to her, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. Now here is our kinsman Boaz,

with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do.” She said to her, “All that you tell me I will do.”

So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother--in--law had instructed her (Ruth 3:1--6).

### *Literary Content*

The literary structure of Ruth which refers to the type of style used to convey the themes of this story is said to be chiasmic. Chiasmic meaning this was the style used when the Bible’s only translation was in Hebrew and Greek used to identify when a complete thought started and ended. Now many writers use punctuation and headers to let readers know when sentences or complete thoughts are starting and ending. According to the article entitled A Literary Analysis of Ruth from the Bible.org website stated the following from author Edward Campbell in regards to the various styles used in Ruth:

Takes an interest in typical people, and seeks to both entertain and instruct “Especially important: they look at ordinary events as being the scene of God’s subtly providential activity. Fun and delight, pathos and violence, characterize the human portrayals; combined with the subtle divine dimension, the total effect is one of joy and seriousness together.” in word--play such as assonance and punning, and in the design of the story with its inclusions (i.e.), symmetry (i.e. Ruth’s return from Boaz with grain in symmetrical scenes), and contrasts (i.e. the general disobedience of Israel characteristic of the time of the judges seen specifically in Naomi’s family abandoning the promised land contrasted with Ruth’s loyalty to Naomi and God in times of trouble; empty versus full; helpless versus provided for and protected; death versus life).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Edward F. Campbell, “Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary, ” *The Anchor Bible*, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 5.

### *Historical Background*

According to the Life Application Study Bible, the author of Ruth is unknown. Some theorists believe Samuel wrote Ruth, but Samuel was said to have died before the work was written. Ruth was estimated to be written sometime around 1375--1050 B.C. The setting of Ruth was during “a dark time in Israel’s history when people lived to please themselves, not God”(Judges 17:6). Ruth was an “ancestor of King David and therefore of Jesus (Ruth 2:6; 4:13--22; Matt. 1:5--16). Moab where Naomi and Ruth resided before returning to Bethlehem was described as:

Moab the perennial enemy of Israel, which was east of the Dead Sea, which stands as the only other mentioned geographic national entity (Ruth 1:1--2). This country originated when Lot fathered Moab by an incestuous union with his oldest daughter (Gen. 19:37). Centuries later the Jews encountered opposition from Balak, king of Moab, through the prophet Balaam (Num. 22--25). For eighteen years Moab oppressed Israel during the time of the Judges (Judg. 3:12--30). Saul defeated the Moabites (Sam. 14:47) while David seemed to enjoy a peaceful relationship with them (Sam. 22:3--4); Later, Moab again troubled Israel (2 Kings 3:5--27; Ezra 9:1). Because of Moab’s idolatrous worship of Chemosh (1 Kings 11:7, 33; 2 Kings 23:13) and its opposition to Israel, God cursed Moab (Isa. 15--16; Jer. 48; Ezek. 25:8--11; Amos 2:1--3). God used “a famine in the land” of Judah (Ruth 1:1) to set in motion this beautiful drama, although the famine does not receive mention in Judges, which causes difficulty in dating the events of Ruth. However, by working backward in from the well know date of David’s reign (1011--971 B.C.), the time period of Ruth would most likely be during the judgeship of Jair, c 1126--1105 B.C. (Judg. 10:3--5). Ruth cover about 11 to 12 years according to the following scenario: 1) Ruth 1:1--18, 10 years in Moab (Ruth 1:4); 2) 1:19--2:23, several months (mid--April to mid--June) in Boaz’s field (1:22; 2:23); 3) 3:1--18, one night at the threshing floor; and 4) 4:1--22, about one year in Bethlehem.<sup>3</sup>

The text demonstrates how God caused “famine in the land” (Ruth 1:1) which made Naomi want to leave Moab because she heard God was providing Israel with food (Ruth 1:6). The text also demonstrates Ruth spent some months gleaning in Boaz’s field as

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<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur, “Ruth, ”: *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 364.

estimated by the harvesting window. Some points in regards to the threshing floor are as follows:

After cattle or oxen trample the sheaves, loosening the grain----That's the threshing part----the master tosses the grain into the evening breeze, using a fork with five or seven tines' Wind scatters the lighter chaff while the valuable grain falls at the master's feet. The kernels are sifted for stones and debris, the straw is collected as food for the animals, and the chaff is used for fuel. The threshing floor is party central. The town's communal threshing floor is very much a public place, with people buying and selling goods of all sorts there during the hours it's not in use for winnowing Threshing the spring crops is such a big deal the town elders are usually on hand to oversee things Landowners remain too guarding their property, since thieves lurk about at harvest time That's why Naomi is certain Boaz was there, sleeping on the threshing floor, keeping watch over his grain by night.<sup>4</sup>

The passage above gives us more insight about the threshing floor. Boaz took great care to ensure Ruth's reputation stayed upstanding. During the harvesting time, we are able to observe in the text the information Boaz was able to gather on Ruth of how she treated her mother in law, how she worked and conducted herself while gleaning in the fields with the other men(Ruth 3:10--11). Boaz approved of her character. Some additional interesting insights regarding historical considerations of the story of Ruth we should consider and think about are as follows:

There are no immoral overtones to Boaz and Ruth spending the night together before marriage (Ruth 3:3--18) Ruth engaged in a common ancient Near Eastern custom by asking Boaz to take her for his wife, symbolically pictured by throwing a garment over the intended woman (Ruth 3:9), just as Jehovah spread his garment over Israel (Ezek. 16:8). The text does not even hint at the moral impropriety, noting that Ruth slept at his feet (Ruth 3:14). Thus, Boaz became God's answer to an earlier prayer for Ruth (Ruth 2:12). Marriage to a Moabites was strictly forbidden by the law. The nations or people to whom marriage was prohibited were those possessing the land that Israel would enter (Exod. 34:16; Deut. 7:1--3) which did not include Moab (Deut. 7:1). Further, Boaz married Ruth, a devout proselyte to Jehovah (Ruth 1:16--17), not a pagan worshiper of

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<sup>4</sup> Liz Curtis Higgs, *The Girl's Still Got It: Take a Walk with Ruth and the God Who Rocked Her World* (Colorado Springs, Co: Waterbrook Press, 2012), 105-106.

Chemosh--Moab's chief deity (later problems in Ezra 9:1--2 and Neh. 13:23--25).<sup>5</sup>

From this account of research, we can conclude that it was not popular to marry a Moabite woman but Boaz married Ruth anyway.

In terms of customs of this era:

Dying without an heir was considered a tragedy in the ancient Middle East. To rectify this situation, the brother of a deceased man was expected to marry the widow in order to produce a child, who would be considered the heir of the deceased. This was called a levirate marriage. Boaz willingly took on this duty, even though he was not the nearest relative (3:12, 13). He bought the land from Naomi, married Ruth, and carried on the family name through the birth of their son. Through all these actions, Boaz exemplified the compassion and love of a redeemer. His life is an illustration for us of the compassion of Jesus, who is our Redeemer (Gal. 3:13).<sup>6</sup>

The text demonstrates where our culture adopted attaching a stigma to those who did not produce children to carry on the family name. It would have been wonderful if more men had similar values similar to those displayed by Boaz viewing women not as objects of sex or pleasure but having love and compassion for God's women and wanting to foster healthy relationships that lead to either healthy Christian fellowship or healthy courtship that leads to marriage. If this were the mindset of many, we would not have the number of broken families, number of abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, single parent homes etc. that currently plague our communities today. This is not to place blame on men for the state of our relationships but rather to acknowledge that a healthy balance is needed in our African American communities regarding the teaching and training needed as to how men and women govern themselves in relationships.

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<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, "Ruth," 364.

<sup>6</sup> Earl Radmacher, Ron Allen, and H. Wayne House, "Ruth," *Compact Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 158.

*Close Reading/Analysis of the Scripture*

A close reading of the text found in Ruth 3:1--6 demonstrates support of the practice of women teaching younger women how to build healthy relationships for Christian fellowship, or courtship that leads to marriage. In the story of Ruth 3:1--6 Naomi wanted security for her daughter--in--law Ruth after the death of her husband (Ruth 3:1). Through Ruth's obedience to her mother--in--law's instruction, and guidance, she was able to gain security through Boaz and was able to preserve the names of their dead husbands; Naomi's other deceased son and become the great--grandmother of King David.

The setting of this portion of the story of Ruth is at the threshing floor. In Ruth 3:1 the text also demonstrates Naomi's love for Ruth by caring about Ruth's future in telling her "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you" (Ruth 3:1). A loving mother always gives her child direction. We see Naomi teaching Ruth what is important in life or their culture. It was important to have security or a good home where she could be comfortable. Naomi did not just think about her own future at this time as do many older women today. She took time away from herself to think about her daughter--in--law and her future. Naomi then proceeds to inform Ruth of their culture regarding the role of her relative Boaz (Ruth 3:2). During that time, because Boaz was a close relative of Naomi's, he was able to act as a kinsman redeemer with the right and responsibility to redeem the forfeited inheritance of the family so that the property of the dead man remained within the family. This responsibility included care for the widow (Deut. 25:5--10).



A close reading of the text describes how Naomi then teaches Ruth how to maximize the favor she saw Ruth already had with Boaz from her experience of following God's law as a believing woman and teaching Ruth how women relate to men in a way that will yield positive results or the security and husband Ruth desired. Naomi advises Ruth how to present herself to Boaz in a way that will produce the most positive result. Naomi tells Ruth to "Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking" (Ruth 3:3). Naomi tells Ruth how to look her best before she interacts with Boaz.

In reading and relating this text to today's courting and dating scene, we can observe here that there is something to looking one's best when relating to the opposite sex. Men are said to be visual so in order to gain the most possible favor a woman must look her best. Women know this about men and spend billions on clothing, make--up, hair and any other enhancements they deem necessary to capture the attention of the man of their dreams. From the story of Ruth, we learn some ways women would relate to men in the past. They would look their best and ensure that he was full before they would interact with him according to Ruth.

There is also something to be learned regarding Boaz's behavior and earlier observations toward Ruth. We learn earlier that Ruth had gleaned in Boaz' field during harvest time for barley. We can infer that before she and her mother--in--law decided to present herself to Boaz on the threshing floor, she had known him for a while. She was able to get to know him or verify his fruit. It says in the Bible that we will know them by their fruit according to Matt. 7:16 or by what they do or their actions not only by what

they say. Women must verify a man's fruit and men must verify a woman's fruit and believe what they see. Ruth was able to observe his character in the way he talked to her, protected, and provided for her. Boaz had time to verify Ruth's character through the way she treated and loved her mother-in-law (Ruth 2:11). Boaz also noted the way Ruth gleaned in the fields, her reputation in the village and the way she conducted herself around the other men (v. 10). From the information, Boaz gathered about Ruth's character he grew to respect her. She had conducted herself well in the community. A close reading of the text where Naomi tells Ruth "When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do" (Ruth 3:4). Naomi is directing Ruth in the traditions that were currently used to form their relationships.

Ruth lying down at Boaz's feet is a non-sexual way of submitting herself to Boaz. It is here that Boaz is sure what Ruth wants from him. Ruth does not want sex but wants something more permanent from Boaz. She wants him to be her kinsman-redeemer. Ruth tells Naomi "All that you tell me I will do" (Ruth 3:5). A close reading of the text here, shows that Ruth trusts Naomi and informs her that she will do what she has advised her to do. Ruth according to scripture "So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her" (Ruth 3:6). Naomi has at this point instructed Ruth in her customs of obtaining a kinsman-redeemer. Naomi is able to guide Ruth through this process with good information. She is not jealous of Ruth and does not seek to mislead her with bad advice. Ruth is able to trust the instruction she has received from Naomi. Ruth is obedient to the guidance she has received from Naomi of how to conduct herself with Boaz. It is in the passages mentioned above that we see how a

loving mother-in-law's guidance and instruction of a younger woman's process of courtship enables blessing to be released in the lives of both women.

In today's society, we see less and less, the fruits of women teaching younger women the art of building healthy relationships for Christian fellowship or courtship that leads to marriage. We know this is the case based on the decline of marriage in the African American community, number of single parent homes, abortions, and number of sexually transmitted diseases and rate of new AIDS cases that occur in the African American community. These practices must change, improve, and adopt some of the practices that were practiced in the past. Boaz did not view Ruth as an object of sex or pleasure but he respected Ruth for the type of woman she was. Ruth did not look at Boaz as a sex object but respected him, loved his character and wanted him to be her kinsman-redeemer. Support for the fact Ruth and Boaz both had Godly characters is as follows:

In chapter three, Ruth instructs Boaz what he must do (Ruth v.9); in chapter two she is passive, astonished at Boaz's graciousness toward her. IN both chapters Boaz is careful to protect Ruth's honor: in chapter two he takes care that she will stay with the young women (and not the men; Ruth v.8), and that the men will neither reproach nor rebuke her (vv.15--16); in chapter three he makes sure that no one will see her with him (v.14). In 2:18 Ruth brings Naomi what was left after she had been satisfied, a sign of her good character, and in 3:17 she delivers barley to Naomi as Boaz had instructed, a sign of his good character. The final locale in both chapters is Naomi's home (Ruth 2:18--23; 3:16--18)<sup>7</sup>

### **New Testament Titus**

Titus 2:1--5. The supporting pericope is listed below:

But as for you, teach what is consistent with sound doctrine. Tell the older men to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or

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<sup>7</sup> Michael D. Coogan, ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Study Bible with Apocrypha* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 392.

slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self--controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited (Titus 2:1--5)

### *Literary Content*

The text Titus contains three short chapters and is said to be a letter written by Paul to Titus directing him to finish setting up the church in Crete. Titus' focus or emphasis is in choosing elders with a certain standard they should be chosen by. In Titus chapter one In an article entitled "Evil Beasts, Lazy Gluttons" written by Rlemer Faber the following was stated regarding elders "In other words, eligibility for eldership is evidenced by knowledge of the faith, while ineligibility is manifested by improper behavior".<sup>8</sup> I agree with this statement; what the text demonstrates, is if a person is not adhering to the Lords commandments and statutes as evidenced by one's life the person is not a believer or one of God's children and therefore should not be eligible to be an elder.

Titus chapter II focuses on the moral standards the people are to adhere to should they want to be saved and be in right relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In an article written by Robert Bowman states that Titus 2:13 refers to our God and our Savior. Our Savior being Jesus the Christ<sup>9</sup> According to 2 Peter 3:18 Jesus is referred to as our Lord and Savior. Titus 2:1--15 over--all is setting a standard of living and values for older men, women, younger men, and women to live by. Titus is instructed by Paul to

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<sup>8</sup> Rlemer Faber, "Evil Beasts Lazy Gluttons: A Neglected Theme in the Epistle to Titus," *Westminster Theological* 67, no. 1 (2005): 135-145, accessed May 10, 2013, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?>

<sup>9</sup> Robert Bowman, "Jesus Christ God Manifest: Titus 2:13 Revisited," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51, no. 4 (2008): 733-752, accessed May 9, 2013, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?>

share the standards laid out in the letter he wrote him with great passion. He also wanted Titus to rebuke anyone who speaks false doctrine to the people of Crete (v. 2:1). Titus' job was to set up the church in Crete and train the people in the things of Jesus Christ until they are self-sufficient enough with their newly selected leadership or elders to carry out the established church without him (v. 5). Once Titus is finished setting up the new church in Crete Paul told him in the letter to meet him in the next town of Nicopolis per Titus 3:12 if he is able.

### *Historical Background*

To the people of Crete during those times, the ministry of Jesus Christ was new. Nelson's

Compact Bible Dictionary suggests that "The Cretans were among those present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost" (Acts 2:11). Nelson's Compact Dictionary also states the following regarding Cretan lifestyle: "The Cretan lifestyle was known for its excesses

In writing to Titus, Paul quoted from the Greek poet Epimenides of Knossos that "Cretans are always liars, evil beast, lazy gluttons"<sup>10</sup> According to an article written by Gary Patrick stated "All Cretans may be habitual liars, but some might on rare unguarded occasions tell the truth".<sup>11</sup> A close reading of the quote implies that it is wrong to label a whole group of people just based on the observation of a few. According to Nelson's Compact Bible Commentary: "The first verse of this letter says it was written by the apostle Paul who probably sent this letter to Titus sometime between his two Roman

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<sup>10</sup> Faber, "Evil Beast," 156.

<sup>11</sup> Gray Patrick, "The Liar Paradox and the Letter to Titus," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (April 1, 2007): 302-314, accessed May 6, 2013, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?>

imprisonments, between A.D. 62 and 65 . . . Tradition holds that Titus was written shortly after First Timothy, around A.D. 63”<sup>12</sup>.

The Cretans were used to living without rules. According to scripture the following was stated about the Cretans “It was one of them, their very own prophet, who said, “Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons”(Titus 1:12). This is the reason Paul wanted Titus to instruct the Cretans on how they should govern themselves as noted in Titus 2:1--5. According to scripture Paul delegates two tasks to Titus “I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you” (Titus 1:5).

### *Close Reading/Analysis*

Paul directed Titus during this time to teach the older women to teach younger women how to govern themselves (vv.3--4) , and how to build healthy relationships for Christian fellowship or to preserve their marriages. In Titus 2:1--2, Paul is directing Titus to teach the older men to “be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. Quite often, the way younger men learn how to be men is by watching the older men, and model different aspects of various relationships and interactions. The text demonstrates that reminding the older men how they are to conduct themselves is of high importance (v. 2). Oftentimes when a young man grows up in a household, it is here that he is said to learn certain behavior. Another viewpoint follows:

The instructions to older men open with a triad of virtues that reflect the ideal of moderation shared by this author and his culture. In 1 Timothy the same virtues are presented as qualifications of both men and women for various church

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Earl Radmacher, Ron Allen, and H. Wayne House, “Titus,” *Compact Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 884.

leadership roles (3:2, 8, 11); here they define the ideal behavior of all older men, probably understood as those over the age of fifty . . . Faith and love, the nucleus of the next triad, are more identifiably Christian virtues. “Endurance” completes the triad instead of the similar, but more familiar item, “hope” (see also 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 3:10; cf. 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal 5:5–6; Col 1:4–5; 1 Thess, 1:3; 5:8). The endurance that the author has in mind here is not patience in the face of affliction, for no affliction is mentioned in this letter (cf. Rom 5:3; 2 Cor 1:6). The context suggests instead patient waiting for the fulfillment of the hope of eternal life (1:2; 2:13; 3:7; cf. Rom 8:25), or steadfastness in doing good works (2:14; 3:1, 8, 14; cf. Rom 2:7) or in adhering to the truth (1:1; cf. 1:14). The emphasis falls, however, on the issue of soundness, which highlights the contrast with the opponents (1:13).<sup>13</sup>

Likewise to create balance Paul also directs Titus to instruct the older women to “be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the Word of God may not be discredited” (Titus 2:4–5). A close reading of the text shows Titus instructing the older women how to conduct themselves so that they are a good example to the younger women. Some additional insights into the meaning of a woman being good, kind, and chaste according to the text are as follows:

The good either describes the quality of the domestic work or, more probably, stands as a separate item encouraging the trait of gentleness . . . (Oddly, it appears in both roles in the NRSV's translation, where young women are urged to be good managers and kind.) Like the older and younger men, the young women are also urged to be self-controlled or prudent . . . This was one of the cardinal virtues of Stoic philosophy and a favorite of this author as well (see comments on 1 Tim 2:9). When applied to women it usually acquired the sense of sexual restraint, a point reinforced in this list . . . In the context of this letter, the words do not refer to sexual abstinence (a position firmly opposed by the author) but to a wife's sexual fidelity to her spouse.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jouette M. Bassler, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 193.

<sup>14</sup> Bassler, *Abingdon New Testament*, 196.

Paul instructed Titus to also have the older women teach the younger women how they are to conduct themselves and also how they are to govern themselves in their families with their children and husbands. (Titus 2:4--5). This type of teaching is important today because it is very apparent that some women have not been taught these principles. Some other insights regarding this passage are as follows:

A new note is struck when the author insists that the older women be *kalodidaskalous*, a Greek word found only here, perhaps coined by this author, and meaning either good teachers or, more likely, those who teach what is good (NRSV). This teaching is distinct from that prohibited in 1 Tim 2:12 in a number of ways. It was done in the context of the home, not the worship service; it concerned only domestic issues, not doctrinal ones; and the students were young women, not the church at large.<sup>15</sup>

This viewpoint from Pomeroy that older women teach younger women makes a clear point that what is being taught is not Bible but life principles that should be taught to younger women so that they may know how to govern themselves in their families. The following text brings this way of thinking into question:

Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately. (Acts 18:24--26)

The following text also addresses women teaching:

For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, (1 Corinthians 14:31) It has been suggested that the older women mentioned here are the women deacons of 1 Tim 3:11 and that this teaching constitutes their assigned responsibility. There are some similarities between the virtues expected of older women and those required of women deacons (if such they were), but neither list of virtues is specific to an office. Moreover, nothing in this passage suggests that the older women held a leadership position in the church, even though the behavior they taught was encouraged on behalf of the church (v. 5b).

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<sup>15</sup> Bassler, *Abingdon New Testament*, 194.



This was such an established procedure that some Neopythagorean treatises on the proper behavior of women—including instructions for a wife . . .<sup>16</sup>

In some cases, older women are not able to direct the younger women because they may be too self-absorbed to help anyone else. Some older women may not have learned these biblical principles themselves and thus cannot teach them to others. Whatever the case, we see the fallout from the lack of instruction or parental support in our crime rates among youth and young adults, in the number of teen pregnancies, in the rate of abortions etc.

As a result, another support Paul instructed Titus to put in place was to build faith and turn the people back to the way God would have them live this life was by setting up churches (v. 5). Paul has directed Titus to provide the people with moral values and appoint elders as he sets up new churches or ministries in Crete; which is similar to the way moral values and church leaders are governed, or established in many churches today. Biblical books are currently used as a way to set up and govern different aspects of the church, as it should be. During Paul's time, there was no finished Bible like the one we enjoy and use for direction today. A close reading of the text shows that Paul has written a letter to Titus on how the new churches in Crete should be set up and how elders are to be appointed based on certain criteria. Paul has also given Titus sets of standards by which the people are to govern themselves.

In conclusion, our present culture, especially in the African American community has taken on a different set of values when it comes to what healthy Christian fellowship looks like, what the purpose of courtship should be with a goal of the courtship to

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<sup>16</sup> Bassler, *Abingdon New Testament*, 195.

determine whether a couple is suitable for marriage. The focus of this Doctor of Ministry Project is supporting the practice of women teaching younger women how to build healthy relationships for Christian fellowship or courtship. Some startling statistics on African Americans follow: The 2012 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows the number of single parent homes in 1980 in the United States to be 6,061,000. In 2008, the number of single parent homes has increased to 10,536,000. In comparison to Japan, Canada, Denmark, France, and Germany, the United States had the highest rate of single parent homes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website AIDS and HIV infection, “African Americans accounted for 44% of all new AIDS cases in 2010, even though African Americans only account for 12% to 14% of the over--all population in the United States.”<sup>17</sup> The practice of women teaching younger women how to build healthy relationships for Christian fellowship, or courtship the focus of this Doctor of Ministry project the data demonstrates a large decline in this area. The church has to continue to support the effort of restoring the value in women teaching younger women the art of building healthy relationships among Christians or engaging in healthy courtship. There are new churches popping up all across the nation of various denominations depending on the focus and beliefs of the group that has decided to create the church. Many of these new entities lack biblical standards and truth. The truth given to Paul on how to set up a church that teaches and believes in Jesus Christ is still relevant today as a viable road map if the church is to be founded on the right things and that is the belief in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and the entire Word of God provided by God for believers.

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<sup>17</sup> “Hiv and Aids in the United States,” By Geographic Distribution, last modified June 2012, accessed November 3, 2013, [http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/statistics\\_geographic\\_distribution.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/statistics_geographic_distribution.pdf).

This argument matters because if one wants to build healthy relationships and courtships women must continue to teach the younger women how to govern themselves in their relationships as described in Ruth and Titus. If one does not know how to build a healthy relationship that is God centered meaning based on God's commandments and statutes then one should not offer advice to others. Women should not advise other women to go against wisdom described in the Bible. I have often heard women mention the bad advice they received from other silly women advising them to conduct themselves in their relationships in anti--Bible ways. Many women do not stop to consider whether the method has worked or not in the past. Oftentimes the method has not worked but they keep governing themselves in their dating relationships the same old way as if the outcome will change. The church must reinforce the values laid out in God's Word, which consist of total reliance on the Word of God and the belief in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior who is the only way to God the Father.

I have attended several churches to observe their members and foundations. The churches with deep foundations in what the Word of God says about the church are the ones that have tremendous growth and positive impact on God's people. Teaching God's people as it states in Titus chapter II how they are to behave and observe God's commandments and statutes is how God's children are able to obtain God's continued favor and blessings according to the Word. If we want our children to be covered, we must lay the proper foundation for this to happen as laid out in God's Word. God did not intend that we continue with the large numbers of single parent homes, abortions and rate of Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases that currently plague the African American community. We must go back to older women teaching the younger women

how to govern themselves in their relationships that will produce positive and healthy fellowship, courtship, and marriages instead of single parent homes and sexually transmitted diseases.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

One very important need for many of us is the ability to fellowship with others. This human need for fellowship or relationships is a normal instinct or desire for most of us and dates back to the beginning of time. Some people will go to great lengths to satisfy their need for companionship. An investigation into the History of African American relationships is foundational to this Doctor of Ministry project in an attempt to understand or note the progression of the disconnect present in some of our African American relationships. This disconnect over the course of time has produced negative statistics. “Among young adults who were born in the early 1980s, 34 % were married at age twenty seven, while 20 % were unmarried and living with a partner (cohabiting) and 47 %were single . . . On average, young adults with more education were more likely to be married and less likely to be cohabiting.”<sup>1</sup> According to the Pew Research Center study the following was noted about marriage:

About half 52% of all adults in this country were married in 2008; back in 1960, seven--in--ten 72% were. This decline has occurred along class lines. In 2008, there was a 16% point gap in marriage rates between college graduates 64% and those with a high school diploma or less 48%. In 1960, this gap had been just four percentage points 76% vs. 72%. The survey finds that those with a high school diploma or less are just as likely as those with a college degree to say they want to

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, “College graduates more likely than those with less education to be married at age 27 on the Internet,” *The Economics Daily*, March 28, 2014, accessed April 30, 2014 [http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2014/ted\\_20140328.html](http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2014/ted_20140328.html).

marry. But they place a higher premium than college graduates 38% versus 21% on financial stability as a very important reason to marry.<sup>1</sup>

“African Americans accounted for 44% of all new AIDS cases in 2010 even though African Americans only account for 12% to 14% of the over--all population in the United States.”<sup>2</sup>

The practice of women teaching younger women how to build healthy relationships for Christian fellowship, or courtship that leads to marriage the focus of this Doctor of Ministry Project the data demonstrates a negative impact in the way African Americans governed their relationships. We must understand the history of our African American relationships as well as history associated with women teaching younger women the art of building healthy relationships among Christians or engaging in healthy courtship that will lead to healthy Christian fellowship.

From the 1800's to the present, this research project reviews the history of African American relationships noting several primary and secondary sources. In reviewing the history of our African American relationships, this investigation informs us of our past practices as well as notes some best practices in of the art of building healthy relationships. We must continue to educate women in making better life choices as a way of improving the structure/culture of our African American relationships, marriages, and families. We must note what worked in the past regarding our courtship, relationships, and marriages. We must return to the practice of women teaching younger women tried

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<sup>1</sup> Kim Parker et al. “Section One Overview: The Class-Based Decline in Marriage,” in *The Decline of Marriage and Rise of New Families* ed. Paul Taylor (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2010),i.

<sup>2</sup> “Hiv and Aids in the United States,” By Geographic Distribution, last modified June 2012, accessed November 3, 2013, [http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/statistics\\_geographic\\_distribution.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/statistics_geographic_distribution.pdf).

and successful tips on building healthy relationships that lead to healthy Christian fellowship or marriage.

Many have asked what has happened to our African American relationships/culture because many singles no longer seem to value marriage, as it was valued in the past. African American women are having a difficult time identifying eligible men who would be suitable marriage partners. Some other questions to be researched are why there are so many divorces and single parent homes.

Women need to learn how to conduct themselves in their relationships in a way that does not produce the negative results current statistics are showing in the areas of abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, and single parent homes. This research also reviews what courting practices have emerged from the history of our relationships that women should observe to aid them in conducting, building healthy relationships for Christian fellowship, or choosing a mate who is suitable for marriage. This research supports this Doctor of Ministry project in learning how we have governed our relationships in the past and what needs to change to create more healthy relationships for the future. We must communicate this change by continuing to build upon the practice of women teaching younger women the art of building healthy relationships for Christian fellowship or that will lead to a successful marriage.

### **Courtship, Marriage and Divorce 1850 through Present**

This research starts fifty years after the time Africans were brought over in slave ships to America in the early 1800s. Although there were some Africans who migrated to the United States of their own free will, the majority were victims of slavery. Marriage

and courtship among slaves was described as follows:

Marriage among slaves was permitted at the discretion of owners, sometimes arranged by them, and sometimes simply forbidden. For slaves who were allowed to marry, their status was neither respected nor sanctioned by law because they were the property of their owners. Some slaveholders, however—usually those with strict religious beliefs—encouraged their slaves to be monogamous and marry in the eyes of God. Slaves had little time and even less freedom for courting. When slaveholders did not choose mates for their slaves, those slaves could select from among the owner's other . . . or sometimes from the slaves of nearby or neighboring estates. If a slave chose to court someone on another homestead, he or she was required to get permission to visit on weekends and holidays. Courtship was generally brief, with the exchange of small gifts or poems for those who could read and write, and visits among the families.<sup>3</sup>

Slaves were at the mercy of their masters. Depending on the character of the master, life for the slaves he owned could range from tolerable to barbaric.

Courtships were very brief, for as soon as a man or woman began to manifest interest in the opposite sex, the master busied himself to select a wife or husband and only in rare cases were the desire of the individual considered. When the selection was made, the master read the ceremony and gave them a home. He always requested, or rather demanded that they be fruitful. A barren woman was usually separated from her husband and sold. Marriages offered a secure refuge for some slaves. However, few marriages were allowed to thrive, as couples were frequently separated at slave markets and their children sent to homesteads throughout the South. Very few slaves grew up with two parents.<sup>4</sup>

One important historical note concerning the family is that men played a very important role in shaping, directing, and protecting the family as stated below. During slavery, the family remained a principal base for social affiliation, economic activity, and political organization. Family traditions in Western Africa served as the model for family life during the period of slavery. The biological father was responsible for ensuring physical

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<sup>3</sup> Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, "Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936–1938," *Arkansas Narratives* 2, no. 7, (November 17, 2013):7, accessed November 3, 2013, <http://memory.loc.gov>.

<sup>4</sup> Library of Congress, "Born in Slavery," 2-4.



and psychological well-being.<sup>5</sup> There were many conflicts because of the lack of respect that was shown to their relationship and marriages by their owners and other slaves. According to Rawick, “Adultery marked a leading cause of marital difficulties for slave couples, and slave men often craved revenge against the slave interloper”.<sup>6</sup> Another source of challenge according to historian White, “Once slaveholders realized that the reproductive function of the female slave could yield a profit, the manipulation of procreative sexual relations became an integral part of the sexual exploitation of female slaves”.<sup>7</sup> From the following text, we see the importance of media, books, plays and other modes of communication had on communities. These are powerful tools used to shape the minds of America.

The trials of marriage, from courtship to divorce court, were popular subjects in news reports and gossip columns as well as short stories, plays, and novels. Many of the writers treat these phases of marriage simultaneously, juxtaposing the passions of youthful courtship with placid marital stability and the destructive forces of divorce. By doing so, these authors demonstrate the dramatic shifts occurring between generations in their ideals of marriage.<sup>8</sup>

Marriages in the past were often times arranged. Marriage was not based on romance as stated and described below. The expectations of the couple at this point in history had begun to change:

By the nineteenth century, the popular Puritan belief that love bloomed after marriage had given way to the idea that romantic love was a prerequisite for

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<sup>5</sup> Audrey B. Chapman, “In Search of Love and Commitment: Dealing with the Challenging Odds of finding Romance,” *In Black Families: 3rd edition*, ed. Harriette Pipes McAdoo (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 290-291.

<sup>6</sup> George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publications, 1972),.

<sup>7</sup> Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*. (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1999),68.

<sup>8</sup> Kimberly A. Freeman, "Courtship, Marriage, and Divorce," in *American History through Literature 1870-1920*, ed. Tom Quirk and Gary Scharnhorst (Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2006), 292-301, accessed December 12, 2013, *Gale Virtual Reference Library*.

marriage. Courtship, then, was not a matter of confirming compatibility but of allowing love to reveal itself. Marriage became the affirmation of true love. In her study of Victorian courtship letters, Karen Lystra writes that the letters share a concept of love as "anchored in [the] ideal of an essential self which could be communicated" (p. 7). Love struck when these selves met. Fortunately, for literature's sake, the course of true love rarely runs smoothly, and the obstacles to true love—social barriers, parental interference, and miscommunication—provided infinite plot twists appealing to audiences.<sup>9</sup>

During earlier times in America, race played a very important part in whom, one would and could marry. The historical accounts of what race played in relationships are listed as follows:

Ethnic background also limited the selection of one's spouse, as in Charles W. Chesnutt's (1858–1932) 1900 novel *The House behind the Cedars* (1900). With light skin, good looks, and good educations, the siblings John and Rena Warwick can easily "pass" as white; however, while John does so successfully for years, Rena's ethnicity is exposed during her courtship with the wealthy, white George Tryon. In addition to exploring racial and class tensions in courtship, some literature began to examine changing ideas about sexuality. In the nineteenth century, women were expected to control not only their own sexual passions but also those of men; however, by the end of the century women were overcoming the Victorian view that they were passionless.<sup>10</sup>

Here we find historical accounts of women beginning to express themselves on how they experienced sex. This new experience for women put great pressure on marriages. The account of the thoughts of women and sex are as follows:

By 1920, women were acknowledged to enjoy sex as well as men. In fact, sex became increasingly intertwined with the notion of romantic love, so that there was yet another shift in this romantic ideal. While love was considered the height of self-revelation in the late nineteenth century, in the early twentieth century love became contingent upon sexual pleasure. Ellen Rothman cites one editor who noted in 1913 that "sex o'clock" had struck in America. While many writers

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<sup>9</sup> Freeman, "Courtship, Marriage, and Divorce," 292-301.

<sup>10</sup> Freeman, "Courtship, Marriage, and Divorce," 292-301.

still avoided explicit sexuality, many naturalist and early modernist writers were more direct in their treatment of sexuality in courtship.<sup>11</sup>

During this time, women wanted as much as possible from their marriages as listed in the historical account below. This value system has shaped how many of us view marriage. Often people would like to obtain at least some of the benefits in marriage as listed below:

As both pragmatic social contract and romantic bond, marriage often created conflicting ideals. Lystra describes Victorian marriage as the transforming of "an essentially voluntary and volatile romantic bond to the involuntary obligations and duty-bound roles of husband and wife" (p. 192). In addition to providing social status and economic security, marriage was also to provide spiritual, emotional, and sexual satisfaction—a tall order. In short, marriage became a central image of the American dream. The plots of Steele MacKaye's (1842–1894) play *Won at Last* (1877) and David Belasco (1853–1931).<sup>12</sup>

#### *Courtship 1940 – 1950*

We observe from the historical account listed below that, the age of Americans when they married has changed throughout history. The historical account below describes the age Americans were when, they married during this period.

During the 1950's, Americans were marrying at a younger age than they had in previous generations. As Brett Harvey reported in *The Fifties: A Woman's Oral History*, "the median marriage age dropped from 24.3 to 22.6 for men [during the decade], and from 21.5 to 20.4 for women." Women were more likely to marry in their teens than were men: by 1959, 47% of all brides were younger than nineteen. This trend was a continuation of the marriage boom of the late 1940s, which was originally thought to be a temporary response by young Americans to the end of the war. By the 1950s, however, the trend seemed to be longer-lived, and it had

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<sup>11</sup> Freeman, "Courtship, Marriage, and Divorce," 292-301.

<sup>12</sup> Freeman, "Courtship, Marriage, and Divorce," 292-301.

the endorsement of many of the nation's experts.<sup>13</sup>

The way teens dated in the past is detailed in this historical account. The way people dated in the past has influenced the way people date or court today. Some practices that are similar would be for the boys to call, receiving a ring to show commitment, matching jewelry, or clothing is still some of the ways couples express their love for each other.

Some historical accounts on dating are as follows:

Dating Rules. Most communities of teenagers had precise rules of conduct for "steadies" to follow. Boys were expected to call and see their girlfriends a certain number of times a week. Neither boy nor girl could date anyone else, and each had to inform the other of any plans. In most places, steadies were expected to make some sort of outward show of their commitment to each other, as with a ring in marriage. Rings for steadies were popular too; other popular tokens were ID bracelets and matching "steady jackets".<sup>14</sup>

### *Divorce and Remarriage*

Some information in regards to divorce is as follows:

Between 1867 and 1929 the divorce rate increased 2,000%, and as the rate rose, divorce became an increasingly popular subject in magazines, newspapers, popular fiction (such as M. V. Dahlgren's 1887 novel *Divorced*), and even film (such as the 1900 comedy *Why Mrs. Jones Got a Divorce*). As Norma Basch illustrates, there were even pamphlets recounting the trials of famous divorce cases. Numerous factors contributed to this dramatic increase: the women's movement, western expansion, urbanization, secularization, and changing expectations of marriage top the list. Marriage had been viewed as a secular contract in America since the time of the Puritans, but the decreasing emphasis on religion weakened the moral restrictions on divorce while increasing emphasis on worldly satisfaction. Thus when marriage did not satisfy, divorce, though possibly socially stigmatizing, was not soul imperiling. The lower incidence of divorce among immigrant Catholic populations, whose religious beliefs

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<sup>13</sup> Phyllis McGinley, "The Fearful Aspect of Too-Early Dating," *Good Housekeeping*, April 1956, 60-61.

<sup>14</sup> Freeman, "Courtship, Marriage, and Divorce," 292-301.

prohibited divorce, also suggests that secularization among the wider population attributed to the divorce rate.<sup>15</sup>

Some factors that influenced our divorce rates are as follows:

Nineteenth--century western expansion is also thought to have increased divorce. After the Civil War, eastern states in general saw a tightening of grounds for divorce in an effort to curb the rising divorce rate, though to little effect. However, western states had more lenient divorce laws. Some cities, such as Sioux City, South Dakota, and later Reno, Nevada, became notorious divorce colonies because with low residency requirements they were thought to encourage migratory divorces (a divorce in which a person seeking divorce would move to another state in order to claim residency and divorce by that state's laws).<sup>16</sup>

The American culture has been one to love the idea and institution of marriage.

Unfortunately, according to the historical references below without direction from the church people did not view marriage how it should have been viewed and often divorced when the relationship did not meet their expectations. One way to reduce the occurrence is to ensure one's mate has a value system that supports marriage. The following historical reference captures the mindset of this era:

One would think that with the rising divorce rate and criticism of marriage in the press, marriage rates would have declined in this period. However, as May illustrates, the opposite occurred. While the population increased 300% between 1867 and 1929, the number of marriages increased 400%. Thus people were getting married at slightly higher rates and divorcing at even higher rates, suggesting that people were not rejecting marriage but rather that they expected more out of it than ever before, and when marriage failed to fulfill these expectations it was becoming easier and easier to divorce. Often divorce occurred not just, because husbands or wives wanted their freedom, as in Ferber's *Roast Beef, Medium*, but also because they wanted to move on to the next marriage, as in Wharton's *The Custom of the Country*.<sup>17</sup>

Some information regarding to the current African American population is as follows:

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<sup>15</sup> Freeman, "Courtship, Marriage, and Divorce," 292-301.

<sup>16</sup> Freeman, "Courtship, Marriage, and Divorce," 292-301.

<sup>17</sup> Freeman, "Courtship, Marriage, and Divorce," 292-301.

In 1998, there were approximately 8.4 million African--American households in the United States. With a total population of approximately 34.9 million, African Americans made up 12.8% of the population of U.S. families.<sup>18</sup>

Some information in regards to the African American family and what changes in our culture or experience has shaped or changed the African American family unit is listed as follows:

Contemporary social forces exert very powerful influences over the formation and nature of family life in black America today. For example, successive waves of migration from rural to urban areas during the twentieth century, racism, poverty, urbanization, segregation, and immigration from outside the United States have profoundly reshaped family life. Families moved from relatively cohesive rural communities to cities where they were anonymous. Not all families were able to re--create networks by moving close to relatives and people they had known in the South or to establish new ones with fictive kin. Urbanization with its fast--paced life, long work hours, multiple jobs, and neighborhoods, proved destructive to family life. Because women had access to the labor market, men assumed domestic responsibilities and shared in the care of children. Historically, strong marriages and commitment to family life have been central features of African--American families. In the last decade of the twentieth century, however, marriage rates among African Americans declined significantly. In 1998, for example, 41% of all African--American men over the age of eighteen had never been married and 37% of African--American women over the age of eighteen had never married (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999). Experts on the African--American family have attributed the declining rates to the shortage of marriageable African--American males (Wilson 1987) and to structural, social, and economic factors (Tucker and Mitchell--Kernan 1995).<sup>19</sup>

### *Challenges to Finding a Mate for African American Women*

The historical account and opinion regarding the challenges some African American women experience during the selection process of finding a suitable mate for

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports, Series P23-205: Population Profile of the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 12, accessed May 13, 2013, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

<sup>19</sup> Audrey B. Chapman, "The Black Search for Love and Devotion: Facing the Future Against All Odds In Black Families," in *Black Families: 3rd edition*, ed. Harriette P. McAdoo (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997), 170.

marriage is as follows:

Throughout history, the population of African-- American women has outnumbered the population of African--American men. By 1990, there were only eighty--eight males for every 100 females (Tucker and Mitchell--Kernan 1995). The shortage of African-- American males is further exacerbated by the large percentage of men who are unemployed, under-- employed, users of narcotic drugs, or mentally ill, and thus fall into the undesirable category (Chapman 1997). That is, few African--American women would consider these men suitable for marriage. Thus, the chances of ever getting married are dramatically reduced by the overall sex--ratio imbalance among African Americans and the relatively low percentage of available marriageable males. For low--income African Americans, the structural constraints appear to be primarily that of unavailability and undesirability. However, among middle--class African Americans, the desire not to marry is more prevalent. Because African--American women have long been in the workforce, their earning power is similar to that of African--American men, and thus many African--American females do not feel a need to marry for economic support.<sup>20</sup>

### *Christian Singles and Sex*

Singles is one of the largest demographics represented in our culture today. People find themselves single for various reasons, whether they are divorced, widowed, separated, never married etc. Many have to deal with various ethical issues with the issue of sex because of their status. Is it ethical for Christian singles to engage in sexual relationships outside of the covenant and protection of marriage as God ordained and explained in His Word. When a man takes a wife, he leaves his parents', his wife becomes first priority in his life and they engage in sexual relations. According to Webster's' Dictionary, the term wife is described as a woman acting in a defined capacity. This means the woman has been given a special place and responsibility in the man's life. She is no longer just a woman, but she has been assigned to the man. She is also referred to as helpmate. They have a relationship that is interdependent. Their quality of life now depends on the work they complete together. This makes sexual relations between them

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<sup>20</sup> Chapman, "The Black Search," 170.

beautiful and safe, unlike the sexual relationships of today that happen outside of the protection of a healthy marriage assuming the marriage is a healthy one.

Because this portion of research is focused on Christian singles, there is the assumption of a Christian belief system being followed. As a Christian single there is also an assumption that we fully believe the Word of God is true and is our guidebook to live by, no matter how others are living in our culture today. There are some people who live by the ethical theory consequentialism, which believes the best consequences are those in which happiness is maximized. Consequentialism according to Webster's Dictionary is a doctrine that supports the belief that the morality of an action is to be judged solely by its consequences. The act is moral when it produces a good result. Happiness in terms of what makes me happy may not consider anyone else's happiness. For example, a man wants to engage in premarital sex and the woman wants to marry first or vice versa. The stress that comes with this type of peer pressure does not produce happiness with the partner who does not want to engage in premarital sex. The partner who wants to engage in sexual relations before marriage is also not happy because he or she is not getting what he or she wants. In the case where the relationship has not ended due to their differences, it can become a source of stress. In the event the partner gives into premarital sex, the partner who wanted the sexual relationship before marriage is now happy, but the partner who wanted to wait for marriage often times is unhappy. If this conflict is not resolved, eventually the relationship will not grow and will end. This is one of the reasons that it is a good practice to ensure that the couple has similar moral values and expectations for their relationship.



In relationships, there are times when compromise takes place and both parties are not necessarily happy. It is also my belief that singles should not engage in sexual relationships outside of the covenant and protection of a healthy marriage. Sex outside of marriage goes against God's commandments and statutes, which instruct us on how to live. According to Clark and Rakestraw, David Wenham emphasizes the following: "The goodness of human sexuality while noting also that sexual union is not the most important thing in life and that our sexuality must be expressed according to the Maker's instructions."<sup>21</sup> Mr. Wenham agrees that sex is reserved for marriage. Wenham also states the following on the effects of sex outside of marriage:

Paul recognized very clearly in this chapter the power of the sexual drive, and when he speaks about the dangers of immorality when people are unmarried, he is not downgrading marriage so much as attacking the dangerous foolishness of those who fail to recognize the power of sexual instincts, which should not be suppressed.<sup>22</sup>

This is another example of why it is not good for singles to engage in sex before marriage. Sex between two people with the wrong level of commitment i.e. marriage can be very damaging to both parties even though they may not realize the damage at first. "Sex without the commitment of marriage is not an environment to be vulnerable in" as Karen Lebacqz suggests.<sup>23</sup> Lebacqz states "commitment is needed in order to have a sexual relationship for singles where vulnerability is supported."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> David Wenham, "Marriage and Singleness in Paul and Today," in *Readings in Christian Ethics: Issues and Applications 2*, ed. David Clark, and Robert Rakestraw (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 147.

<sup>22</sup> Wenham, "Marriage and Singleness," 145.

<sup>23</sup> Wenham, "Marriage and Singleness," 145.

<sup>24</sup> Wenham, "Marriage and Singleness," 145.

In Lebacqz's chapter entitled "Appropriate Vulnerability A Sexual Ethic for Singles" Lebacqz argues the need for "A new ethic for single sexuality . . . the tradition that requires celibacy in singleness is not adequate . . . The task is to thread our way between two views of sexuality: the "thou shalt not" approach exemplified by much of the church tradition, and the "thou shalt" approach evident in much of our current culture."<sup>25</sup> Lebacqz does not agree with my view that sex should be reserved only for marriage. She makes the following statements regarding how she believes singles should govern themselves in a sexual relationship. Lebacqz explains her theory as follows:

I agree with the traditional understanding that sex is a gift . . . to be used within the confines of God's purposes. However, I would add to the traditional purposes of union and procreation . . . that I believe opens up a different understanding of human sexuality and of a sexual ethic for singles (as well as couples). Sexuality has to do with vulnerability Eros, the desire for another, the passion that accompanies the wish for sexual expression, makes one vulnerable. It creates possibilities for great joy but also for great suffering. To desire another; to feel passion, is to be vulnerable, capable of being wounded.<sup>26</sup>

Because of the "physical and emotional damage", that Lebacqz agrees is a "consequence of sex for singles" It seems to be far safer to wait until the commitment level is high enough as in a healthy marriage to the point that being wounded could be buffered.<sup>27</sup> The text demonstrates to be vulnerable to someone who has no intention on being vulnerable with one but only to a certain point is very risky. Sex before the commitment of marriage can lead to a great deal of pain and disappointment that could be lessened if the sexual

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<sup>26</sup> Karen Lebacqz, "Appropriate Vulnerability A Sexual Ethic for Singles," in *Readings in Christian Ethics: Issues and Applications 2*, ed. David Clark, and Robert Rakestraw (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 149.

<sup>27</sup> Lebacqz, "Appropriate Vulnerability," 149.

component of the relationship was taken out of the equation. Sex before marriage has become like an unhealthy sport to some; just done purely for pleasure and recreation.

After all, to choose to be vulnerable while someone else may have chosen not to be vulnerable will leave one wounded. No one likes to feel wounded. It is the world's survival of the fittest. In addition, may the best man or woman win in love and war.

Lebacqz states the following arguments in support of her proposed ethic for singles:

Vulnerability may be the precondition for both union and procreation: without a willingness to be vulnerable, to be exposed, to be wounded, there can be no union. To be "Known" . . . is to be vulnerable, exposed, and open.<sup>28</sup>

Lebacqz says there must be a "willingness to be vulnerable" in these relationships with singles who include sex.<sup>29</sup> We currently have a culture of people where this vulnerability is not being practiced in a healthy way. Our marriage rates are at an all-time low.

According to the 2012, Census, the demographic single never been married with children is at an all-time high compared to the number of single parent homes of years ago.

Oftentimes, once the relationship has ended the man or woman goes onto his or her new relationship and practices little or no interaction with the children he or she has left behind per numerous accounts I have heard.

This information is in support of our true reality here in Detroit by the level of crime committed by youth and young adults. The lack of parenting, parental supervision, a lack of moral, religious and family values being taught in the home and job loss have been cited on Fox 2 News as the reason why we experience such crime in our city.

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<sup>28</sup> Lebacqz, "Appropriate Vulnerability," 152.

<sup>29</sup> Lebacqz, "Appropriate Vulnerability," 152.

Lebacqz also argues in defense of her ethical suggestions on sexual relations between singles as follows:

The implications for a sexual ethic are profound. Any exercise of sexuality that violates appropriate vulnerability is wrong. This includes violations of the partner's vulnerability and violations of one's own vulnerability. ...Similarly, seduction is wrong, for the seducer guards her or his own vulnerability and uses sex as a weapon to gain power over another. Any sexual encounter that hurts another, so that she or he either guards against vulnerability in the future or is unduly vulnerable in the future, violates the "appropriate vulnerability" which is part of the true meaning and purpose of our ... sexuality. ...Sex is not "just for fun" or for play or for physical release, for showing off, or for any of a host of other human emotions and expressions that are often attached to sexuality. It is for the appropriate expression of vulnerability, and to the extent that expression is missing, the sexual expression is not proper.<sup>30</sup>

It sounds as if Lebacqz wants what can only be obtained in a healthy marriage. If this were what is expected of singles who would like to engage in sex one would not get this result in the majority of our present relationships. There are numerous single parents who have never been married, with children who are in some cases hurting because of the absent relationship with the other parent. In our society, the majority of singles engaging in pre--marital sex is hurting one another because they are not building their relationships on a healthy foundation. According to scripture the type of sin that leads to death is when there is a lack of love for one's brother or sister (1 John 3:12--15). When one does not enter a relationship with love in one's heart for the other person the foundation needed for a healthy relationship is now lost. Singles must lead with love for the other person in order to build a healthy relationship. When one leads with love the other person's best interest is then considered. When one's best interest is taken into consideration then there are no games or deception. Love in the relationship is described in 1 Corinthians 13.

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<sup>30</sup> Lebacqz, "Appropriate Vulnerability," 153.

Sex before the commitment of marriage will lead to the death of something eventually. David Wenham, stated the following regarding to sex outside of the context of marriage. Wenham stated:

That supposedly liberated view leads to chaos, because sex is a powerful force with dangerous potential when misused; it leads to the sexual distortions, unhappiness, and violence that are characteristic of the “free societies of the West, as well as to the aborting of millions of unwanted children. The Christian ...view sees sex as a great good ...to be used with care in the context of a loving, ongoing relationship between one man and woman. In that context, human sexuality can be the joyful, beautiful thing that it is designed to be rather than the ugly thing that the human race has often made it.<sup>31</sup>

In my opinion, and based on the research, engaging in sex only while in the context of marriage is the safest way of relating and dating for a Christian single.

In conclusion, singles should not engage in sexual relationships outside of the covenant and protection of a healthy marriage. Sex outside of marriage is not the way to build healthy Christian relationships or fellowship that will lead to a healthy marriage. There are physical, emotional, and spiritual reasons why one should not fornicate or commit other sexual sins as the world does. This behavior is very destructive, with spiritual and emotional consequences that may hinder one for a lifetime without the proper healing from the Holy Spirit. Premarital sex has destroyed many lives with much emotional pain and trauma not to mention the number of diseases that have been transmitted to unsuspecting victims. Oftentimes a person does not even know he or she is spreading disease to those with whom he/she has engaged in intercourse. The only way to build healthy Christian relationships is to date and relate in a healthy manner by not engaging in sex before marriage. Couples have to learn how to enjoy other activities as well as continue to get to know each other from various perspectives.

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<sup>31</sup> Wenham, “Marriage and Singleness,” 148.

This doctoral project will educate single women on the art of developing healthy relationships. A large component of the project is to direct women back to developing a relationship with Jesus Christ and to stress no sex before marriage. Women will teach younger women tried and surveyed ways of courting and relating designed to build healthy relationships. Too many people have been hurt as a result of poorly formed relationships. There are too many single parent homes, too many divorces, sexually transmitted diseases and aborted babies as a result of the careless activity of sex before marriage.

People must continue to rebuild their families by learning the history associated with and by building healthy relationships as a result of women teaching younger women how to build healthy relationships before they marry. Relationship advice or women teaching younger women how to govern themselves in their relationships has always been passed down from generation to generation. African Americans need to continue this practice with an infusion of how to build healthy relationships in order to preserve our culture, families, and reduce the negative statistics that currently plague our African American relationships and communities. One must continue to grow in relationship with Jesus Christ and study how the Holy Spirit will help and aid one in making better relationship choices. In chapter six, training materials detailing the best way to develop a closer relationship with Jesus Christ as well as how to build healthy relationships is described in detail. To increase clarity in the appendix section of this document, additional training materials are available.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The theological perspective that sustains this ministry project is pneumatology, which is the theology of the Holy Spirit. According to McGrath Augustine of Hippo was one of the major contributors to this theology. His most significant work referred to the Holy Spirit as “The Spirit as bond of love”<sup>1</sup> In regards to Augustine’s theological perspective on pneumatology the following was stated:

In his treatise On the Trinity, Augustine insists upon the distinctiveness of the Spirit: Nevertheless, despite this distinctive identity, the Spirit is what is common to the Father and Son. The Father is only the Father of the Son, and the Son only the Son of the Father; the Spirit, however, is the Spirit of both Father and Son, Binding them together in a bond of love. In his discussion of this point, Augustine concedes that Scripture does not explicitly state that the Holy Spirit is love; however, in that God is love, and the Spirit is God, it seems to follow naturally that the Holy Spirit is love.<sup>2</sup>

The way Augustine describes the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is a wonderful way to view this theology. According to the Bible the fruits of the Spirit are “Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self--control” (Gal. 5:22--23). The Holy Spirit is love because God is love, and it was one of the commandments that God gave us to live by to love one another according to (John 13:34).

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<sup>1</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction Fifth Edition*. (Malden, MA: John Wiley and Sons, 2011), 230.

<sup>2</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 230.

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34).

According to scripture it states “So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them”(1 John 4:16).

According to scripture “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7). This passage describes the character of God and advises believers to love one another, which is one of the characteristics of God’s children. As noted by (1 John 3:11--18) as stated below:

For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous. Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them. We know love by this that he laid down his life for us--and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods, sees a brother or sister in need, and yet refuses help? Little Children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action (1 John 3:11--18).

This passage informs us that we are to observe how people love us instead of what is said.

This is a red flag in a relationship for someone to do a lot of talking with no action

supporting what is said. As noted by (1 John 3:19--23) as stated below:

And by his we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us; we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.



Love is also one of the fruits of the Spirit according to (Galatians 5:22--23). McGrath describes the relationship with the Holy Spirit as follows according to Augustine:

Augustine regards the Spirit as the bond of unity between Father and Son, on the one hand, and between God and believers, on the other. The Spirit is a gift, given by God, which unites believers both to God and to other believers. The Holy Spirit forges bonds of unity between believers, upon which the unity of the church ultimately depends. The church is the “temple of the Holy Spirit which binds together the Father and Son in the unity of the Godhead also binds together believers in the unity of the church.”<sup>1</sup>

Augustine explains the relationship with the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and believers. It is through the power of this type of relationship or theology that produces all of the fruits of the spirit in the lives of God’s people. With this bond, we are able to have fellowship with other believers, which is the focus of my ministry project.

In *Minding the Good Ground* Jason E. Vickers notes “prophetic leaders and movements”<sup>2</sup> that have emerged are reaching a large majority of our church members across the world. These preachers are not necessarily affiliated with any of our popular denominations. These new ministries are reaching and attracting many of our members because they are able to minister to, fill in the gaps, and address with biblical support many of the issues our members are currently experiencing doing away with a lot of our traditional church structures or the way we conduct our worship services in the process Vickers notes.

Many of the new emerging ministries that are on television today are great. I have supported various ministries financially because I was able to note the sermons preached were Bible based and did not come with a lot of the personality challenges, ego’s or the

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<sup>1</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 231.

<sup>2</sup> Jason E. Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 73-99.

politics we see in some of our church ministers that are present in some of our communities.

Church renewal or building up members in the things of the Lord, Vickers states, “through prayer and help from the Holy Spirit together these new ministries and our churches are able to work together for the good of God’s people serving them and “administering the sacraments” and becoming one unified body in Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

Vickers explains this as “incorporation into the Trinitarian life of God”.<sup>4</sup>

With help from the Holy Spirit, believers are able to turn away from the sin that is producing negative relationships in our communities. Many people profess to be Christians but they are deceived. According to 1 John 2:15 we are not to “Love the world or anything in the world (v.15). If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (v. 15). “For all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world” (1 John 2:16). It is through our relationship with Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit that we receive contentment and fulfillment.

This is the reason that pneumatology sustains my ministry project so well is because if we keep a close relationship with Christ which means the Holy Spirit dwells inside of us we would not do the actions that produce so many negative relationships within our communities. With the love of the Holy Spirit living on the inside of us we would not be led by our flesh and loneliness to fall into unhealthy relationships and

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<sup>3</sup> Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground*, 73-99.

<sup>4</sup> Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground*, 101-107.

sexual sins that is the reasons for our high single parent, abortions, number of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS rates.

According to Yves Congor a popular theologian and author of “I Believe in the Holy Spirit”:

The Hebrew word ruah, which is almost always translated by the Greek pneuma, means breath, air, wind, or soul. In the Old Testament especially but also quite often in the New, to translate it as ‘breath’ gives a realism and an emphasis to the data reported and to the biblical texts that our word ‘spirit’ does not suggest so well...The word ruah occurs 378 times in the Old Testament and these occurrences can be divided into three roughly equal groups. It is used in the first place to denote wind or a breath of air. Secondly, it is used for the force that vivifies man--the principal of life or breath and the seat of knowledge and feeling. Finally, it indicates the life of God himself, the fore by which he acts and causes action, both at the physical and at the ‘spiritual’ level.<sup>5</sup>

According to the above passage, Congor describes the Spirit in groups. He describes the Spirit as wind or a breath of air, the force that vivifies man or life, and the life of God himself.<sup>6</sup> There are several layers or dimensions to the purpose and makeup of the Holy Spirit. We are only able to understand only what the Lord allows us to understand as described in God’s Word. The Holy Spirit according to the Bible is a part of the Father and Son. There are three spirits in one that carryout different roles yet all have the same purpose.

Congor also states:

We are predestined in Christ. This means that God (The Father) has included us in the plan of Central that he has brought about and is still bringing about through the one to whom he said: ‘You are my Son’ when Jesus was conceived, baptized, resurrected and glorified. We, then, are loved by the same love with which the Father loved his Son. God’s effective love constitutes us as sons. There is a difference, of course, between being a Son by nature and a son by adoption and Jesus in fact made this difference explicit. John points to it in his gospel and

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<sup>5</sup> Yves Congor, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, translated by Geoffrey Chapman (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Congor, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 4.

epistles by using *huiois* for the first and *tekna* for the second. Despite this, however, we are really sons of God by adoption and by Central. We form with the Son one single being as sons. He is the only Son (*Monogenes*), but he is also the first-born of many brethren. That is why the Father is able to say, in Jesus and thanks to him, to us. 'You are my son'. We are sons by the Holy Spirit, that is, by a communication of the Spirit of the Son (see Gal 4:6; Rom 8:14.). That Spirit enables us to pray: 'Abba. Father. In addition, he is in us like water, which whispers 'come to the Father.'<sup>7</sup>

Here Congor describes the relationship between the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and people.

Congor's note is support largely by the biblical text in terms of the relationship between God and God's people.

According to Michael Welker, theologian and editor, "The philosophical spirit is self-referential and full of certainty . . . The Spirit of the biblical traditions, the "Spirit of truth," bears witness to Christ and to God the Creator and does not speak on its own authority" (John 15:26).<sup>8</sup> The Spirit does not speak on its own authority according to Welker because it is a part of the Father and the Son.

God has used instruction and teaching through the aid of the Holy Spirit to inform, shape and instill commandments, statutes, morals, and values to direct people in terms of how they are to live this life in a way that is pleasing to God. In light of negative statistics facing African Americans in terms of current divorce rates, emotional, spiritual and physical damages caused by abusive relationships, sexually transmitted diseases, and the growing number of single parent homes, it is evident that women need to return to the practice of training younger women in the art of building healthy relationships. Women must rely on help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Relationships require the fellowship of two people. If one of the parties is able to uphold the commandments of the Lord and

<sup>7</sup> Congor, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 217.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Welker ed., *The Work of the Spirit Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (Grand rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), xvii.

follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the other party will either be influenced to do the same or will flee. According to James 4: 7 “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”(James 4:7). How do we submit to God? We submit by following God’s commandments. Following God’s commandments is an act of obedience and submission to God.

Women with help from the Holy Spirit need to continue to train younger women in the art of building healthy relationships for Christian fellowship or that lead to marriage or the preservation of marriage. More and more people say they are Christians but do not want to follow God’s commandments and statutes. I am not speaking of when one makes a mistake, and sins and then must repent I am referring to people who knowingly deviate from the Word of God to suit their life style because “everybody is doing it”. According to scripture the following is stated:

Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God’s seed abides in them;[a] they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters (1 John 3:7--10).

The Holy Spirit according to scripture is part of the Holy Trinity with the Father and Son. The Holy Spirit is what God gives to Christians as a result, of their belief in Jesus Christ, God and submission to God’s commandments and statutes. The Holy Spirit is given to believers as one of the way’s God connects to people. The scripture notes in John 16:7--11:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate[a] will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about[b] sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about

righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

Other notes of the work of the Holy Spirit according to John 16:13--15:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.<sup>9</sup>

According to this scripture, God's children are able to discern their mates because the Holy Spirit guides them into all the truth and declares to them the things that are to come. One will already be informed as to whether to go forward in a particular relationship or not to go forward if one follows the direction of the Holy Spirit that dwells within God's children. Following direction from the Holy Spirit concerning whether to proceed or not to proceed in relationships keeps people safe and at peace. For this reason if one does not have peace about a relationship or situation it is good not to move and to never second-guess one self. Where there is uncertainty and confusion, the Lord does not dwell or is not in it. As supported by the following scripture "for God is a God not of disorder but of peace." (1 Cor. 14:33). God or the Holy Spirit is not directing the person at this point it may be one's flesh. According to scripture, the other way God connects to people is through the acknowledgement of Jesus Christ.

According to scripture Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:16). The text demonstrates that one must know and acknowledge Jesus Christ to be acknowledged by God. In addition, According to the Compact Bible Dictionary the Holy Spirit is described, as follows:

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<sup>9</sup> Zondervan, "John 16:7-15," *Large Print Thin line Bible, New International Version, The Bible in 90 Days* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 913.

“It is the Spirit who gives life” (John 6:63). The Holy Spirit is the Paraclete, or Helper, whom Jesus promised to the disciples after His ascension. The Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are unified in ministering to believers (John 14:16, 26)... This unified ministry of the Trinity is also seen as the Spirit brings the world under conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He guides believers into all truth with what He hears from the Father and the Son. (John 15:26)... The Holy Spirit’s attitude and ministry are marked by generosity; His chief function is to illumine Jesus’ Teaching, to glorify His person, and to work in the life of the individual believer and the church...<sup>10</sup>

The Holy Spirit reveals the truth about a situation or person to believers when we listen to the Holy Spirit and allow the Spirit to guide and direct us in all situations. Looking over my life I can honestly say that it was during the times that I second--guessed the information the Holy Spirit had revealed to me is when I perceived a situation or person incorrectly. I now know never to second--guess when the Holy Spirit reveals truth to me about a person or situation.

More description on the work of the Holy Spirit is as follows:

According to Paul, it is by the Holy Spirit that one confesses that Jesus is Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). Through the same Spirit varieties of gifts are given to the body of Christ to ensure its richness and unity (1 Cor. 12:4--27) The Holy Spirit is the way to Jesus Christ the Son (Rom. 8: 11) and to the Father (Rom. 8:14--15) . . . The Holy Spirit bears witness to us that we are children of God (8:16--17). The Holy Spirit “makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26:27). The Holy Spirit also reveals to Christians the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10--12) and the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:3--5). The Holy Spirit . . . guarantees . . . believers . . . abound in hope with power (Rom. 15:13) . . . Against the lust and enmity of the flesh Paul contrasts the fruit of the Spirit: “Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self--control” (Gal. 5:22--23)<sup>11</sup>

In exploring other popular theologians such as Clark Pinnock the author of *Flame of Love* he stated the following regarding the Holy Spirit’s relationship with God’s people. “The goal of the spirit as he works within our lives shedding light on the word is

<sup>10</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood and F.F. Bruce and R.K. Harrison, *Nelson’s Compact Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), 274-275.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood and F.F. Bruce and R.K. Harrison, *Nelson’s Compact Bible*, 274-75.

to deepen our friendship with God”<sup>12</sup> If we have a relationship with God we will intern have a wonderful relationship with others. The Holy Spirit bridges our relationship with the Father and the Son.

According to James D.G. Dunn, in regards to this passage “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor . . . He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free”(Luke 4:18). So neither was through a Spirit anointed figure inaugurating the age to come strange to Jewish ears” according to Welker.<sup>13</sup> We can infer from Luke that when the Spirit of the Lord is upon us we are anointed to do whatever the Spirit has anointed us to do. We now have the wisdom, knowledge, and drive to carry out the plans of the Lord from direction of the Holy Spirit.

Frank D. Macchia, a theologian stated that the Holy Spirit’s role and place in the Trinity, which is made up of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

God is revealed in the story of Jesus not only as the Son, Jesus Christ, but also as his heavenly Father and as the Holy Spirit who comes from the Father to rest on Jesus. But then the Spirit that is poured out through Jesus fulfills God’s saving identity in the context of a promise of a future new creation. God is ultimately identified here as “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” This is at the base of what it means to say that God is a trinity.<sup>14</sup>

Although the word trinity is said not to be found in the Bible the concept can be inferred in John 3:16 according to Macchia “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and

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<sup>12</sup> Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love, A theology of the holy Spirit*, Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 150.

<sup>13</sup> Welker, *The Work*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Frank D. Macchia, *The Trinity Practically Speaking* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2010), 2-3.



only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”<sup>15</sup> Macchia states, “I then noted that according to this text the Son was sent into the world by his heavenly Father in order to impart the eternal life given in the gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>16</sup> Macchia concludes, “So it seems that the simple gospel is about the cooperative work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>17</sup> According to ( John 16:7--15[NIV]):

But I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.<sup>18</sup>

This Bible passage states that in order to receive the Counselor, Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Truth, Jesus will have to go away. When the Holy Spirit comes, the Spirit will make believers aware of their sin, guide us in attaining righteousness by our belief in Jesus Christ, submitting to God’s commandments, and make it clear how satan and his children are condemned. From the passage, one can infer that when the Holy Spirit comes, the Spirit will guide believers in all truth. If believers are guided in all truth, we are able to make decisions in this life that will bless us and not fall for bad choices that will harm us. In other words, the Holy Spirit guides believers, enabling us to make better choices.

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<sup>15</sup> Macchia, *The Trinity*, 2-3.

<sup>16</sup> Macchia, *The Trinity*, 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> Macchia, *The Trinity*, 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Zondervan, “John 16:7-15,” *Large Print*, 913.

The Holy Spirit aiding women in making better relationship choices has positive consequences. The Holy Spirit aids believing women in making better relationship choices when women follow the direction of our Holy Spirit. Jesus says in the scripture that the Holy Spirit will not speak on its own which means God is directing the Holy Spirit to speak to us. The Holy Spirit will speak what it hears from God. Jesus also said the Holy Spirit will tell us what is to come. When women come in contact with the wrong type of man, based on the negative fruit he displays, if she listens to the direction of her Holy Spirit she is able to foresee that this relationship may cause her a great deal of pain and disappointment if she moves forward in it. Women should always remember not to judge a book by its cover or a man by the way he looks or talks. According to the Word of God as listed in Matthew 7:16 “You will know them by their fruit”<sup>19</sup>. This means you will know him based on what he does and not what he says or promises. Jesus then says the Holy Spirit will take from what is His and share it with believers describing a connection between God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit with believers.

According to Alister McGrath, in reviewing the theology of Athanasius:

Christians were baptized in the name of “the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Athanasius argued that this had momentous implications for an understanding of the status of the person of the Holy Spirit. In a letter to Serapion, Athanasius declared that the baptismal formula clearly pointed to the Spirit sharing the same divinity as the Father and the Son. This argument eventually prevailed.”<sup>20</sup>

I support this theological perspective because I believe the Holy Spirit is part of the union with God the Father and the Son. This union, according to various references in the Bible, describes some aspects of how God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit

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<sup>19</sup> Zondervan, “Matt. 7:16,” 818.

<sup>20</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 229.

function together to link and bless believers. According to McGrath “The Christian tradition has generally understood the work of the Holy Spirit to focus on three broad areas: revelation, salvation, and the Christian life.”<sup>21</sup> Martin Bucer “argues:

That revelation cannot occur without the assistance of God’s Spirit: Before we believe in God and are inspired by the Holy Spirit, we are unspiritual and for that reason we are unable to apprehend anything relating to God. So all the wisdom and righteousness which we possess in the absence of the Holy Spirit are the darkness and shadow of death.”<sup>22</sup>

I believe some aspects of this argument in terms of revelation. I believe we are only able to comprehend whatever the Lord allows us to comprehend at any given moment in accordance with God’s will for our lives. As we mature spiritually as believers in Jesus Christ, God will reveal things to us as God sees fit as needed according to the work to be done for God’s Kingdom. According to McGrath, “John Calvin’s doctrine of the application of salvation, the Holy Spirit plays a major role in relation to the establishment of a living relationship between Christ and believer.”<sup>23</sup>

McGrath also states that the Holy Spirit plays a very important role in terms of believers getting along and being able to love one another.<sup>24</sup> Unless a person has the love of God dwelling on the inside of ones’ heart, I do not believe one is truly able to love another. He or she may view love as a form of possession but is unable to love another person. I believe this is part of the problem with many of our relationships today as people seek to build relationships. Trying to build a relationship with someone who does not believe in Jesus Christ, does not have the Holy Spirit dwelling on the inside of his or

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<sup>21</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 231.

<sup>22</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 231.

<sup>23</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 232.

<sup>24</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 232.

her heart and therefore is not submitted to God's commandments and statutes is an impossible task. The result of life without the Holy Spirit dwelling on the inside of one's heart is death. There is no love in death but only what death produces and offers and it is not love. Death and sin offer the opposite of what love has to offer and healthy relationships cannot be built under these circumstances.

In conclusion, one very important need for many is the ability to fellowship with others with support and direction from the Holy Spirit. This human need for fellowship or relationships is a normal instinct or desire for many and dates back to the beginning of time. Some people will go to great lengths to satisfy their need for companionship.

Throughout the years, we have been taught how to arrange marriages, relate, or have companionship with another to satisfy the need for fellowship through tradition, modeling, and guidance from ancestors. Unfortunately, this practice has not been exercised with fidelity as it had been in the past based on current statistics on the number of divorces, African American single parent homes, and number of marriages, abortions, and fatal sexually transmitted diseases that currently plague our African American communities. With help from the Holy Spirit, we can do better. Our present culture especially in the African American community has taken on a different set of values when it comes to what healthy Christian fellowship looks like, what the purpose of courtship should be with a goal of the courtship to determine whether a couple is suitable for marriage or not according to current statistics in these areas.

The focus of this Doctor of Ministry Project is supporting the practice of women teaching younger women how to build healthy relationships for Christian fellowship, or

courtship that will lead to a healthy Christian relationship with the aid and support of the Holy Spirit.

Some startling statistics regarding African Americans are as follows: According to the 2012 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows the number of single parent homes in 1980 in the United States to be 6,061,000. In 2008, the number of single parent homes increased to 10,536,000. In comparison to Japan, Canada, Denmark, France, and Germany the United States had the highest rate of single parent homes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website, AIDS and HIV infection, "African Americans accounted for 44% of all new AIDS cases in 2010 even though African Americans only account for 12% to 14% of the over--all population in the United States."<sup>25</sup>

The practice of women teaching younger women how to build healthy relationships for Christian fellowship, or courtship that leads to marriage the focus of this project, the data demonstrates a large decline in this area. The church with help and direction from the Holy Spirit has to continue to support the effort of restoring the value in women teaching younger women the art of building healthy relationships among Christians or engaging in healthy courtship. There are new churches popping up all across the world of various denominations depending on the focus and beliefs of the group that has decided to create the church. Many of these new entities lack biblical standards and truth. The truth provided by Paul, regarding how to set up a church that teaches and believes in Jesus Christ is still relevant today. It is a viable road map for the church.

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<sup>25</sup> CDC Website Aids/HIV, HIV Basics, Basic Statistics, accessed November 3,2013, [http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/statistics\\_geographic\\_distribution.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/statistics_geographic_distribution.pdf)

This research matters because if one wants to build healthy relationships and courtships women with help, guidance and direction from the Holy Spirit must continue to teach the younger women how to govern themselves in their relationships as well as learn the art of building healthy relationships themselves. People must learn what is necessary to develop a relationship, faith, and belief in Jesus Christ, which will activate the Holy Spirit to dwell within one's heart and soul. It is at this spiritual level that the Holy Spirit can minister truth and direction to an individual, which will help one's relational outcomes. Learning different relationship tips and testimonies is helpful and can improve relationship outcomes but it does not replace the direction provided by the Holy Spirit. It will be more beneficial for one to learn how to develop a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. One can begin to develop this relationship by first repenting of sin. It means to pray to the Lord for forgiveness of sins committed today as well as in the past and turn away from it. One commits sin when does not conduct one's life based on God's commandments and statutes. Ask for the Lord's help in your areas of weakness and continue to work on it and watch God work. Then one has to pray the prayer listed in Romans chapter 10:8--10 out loud and believe it in one's heart. It is as follows:

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. (Rom. 10:8--10 [NIV]).

One should join a church where the doctrine is Bible based and not just some preacher's opinion. This step will support you in building your faith and in your fellowship with other believers. Do not receive advice from people who do not believe in Jesus Christ and

do not live by God's commandments. They cannot see the mistakes they have made in their own lives and will lead you down a blind dead path to destruction when you are advised to repeat what they did wrong in their lives. Do not receive advice that is against what the Word of God says about various situations. If you do not know what the Word says about a particular subject look it up in the Bible. One should read ones Bible daily. One must learn the role of prayer and how to pray, learn about the role and work of the Holy Spirit, learn how to hear from the Holy Spirit, how to protect oneself from spiritual warfare and what it looks like. The Lord will continue to lead one's study as he/she grow in relationship with God. In support of the information provided above this is the reason that the theology of pneumatology sustains this project because people can achieve nothing aside from the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and relationships.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

This ministry model is designed to educate African American women on making better relationship choices as a way of promoting healthy Christian fellowship, or courting practices that will lay a positive foundation for healthy Christian relationships. Women will influence men in a positive direction in terms of the way we relate, or court one another thus creating a stronger foundation for healthy relationships, and families.

Although the need for companionship is something God has blessed many of God's people to desire, there are exceptions. We do not always set the proper foundation for our relationships to be positive, safe, honest, and a blessing for all parties involved. People who are married in the African American community represent the minority. People who are single for various reasons represent the majority of the population in many of our churches today and we must minister to the needs of this demographic as well.

In view of the negative state of many of our African American relationships there is a need for us to revisit some relationship practices that have worked in the past. New relationship strategies must also be considered because of the shifts that have taken place specifically within our African American culture that is causing many of our families to experience many of the negative outcomes people experience when relationships have



not been established with a healthy Christian foundation. This statement is based on the disproportionately high number of divorces, single parent homes, decrease in marriages, increase in abortions, and fatal sexually transmitted diseases that currently plague our African American communities.

There are multiple reasons why many African American relationships are failing. This ministry model is intended for those who believe in Jesus Christ and seek to follow God's commandments and statutes in a world that is living in an opposite manner. There is the need for people to continue to educate the entire African American community which includes men and women as a way of raising awareness, keeping balance and offering ways of improving the way he/she relate, court and date as a way of building healthy Christian relationships.

To narrow the scope of this ministry model, the focus is educating African American women in the area of mate selection, courtship, or dating practices and the role of the Holy Spirit as a way of laying a positive foundation for healthy Christian courtship. Based on statistics that currently plague our African American community the need for this type of intervention is necessary. A person can only do what one knows or what one has seen modeled we are limited by our experience. Increasing awareness and offering positive Christian courtship strategies should result in singles obtaining healthier relationships. The number of negative statistics that currently plague our African American communities should decrease as the church continues to create ministries designed to educate women and singles on healthy relationship practices. I will review

theoretical resources that have focused on this area; and will support or add additional insight into the topics or focus mentioned above.

### *Foundations in Ministry Practice*

In terms of theoretical foundations in ministry practice, other pastors or practitioners who have created practices or books related to my ministry model Pastor Kate McVeigh's book entitled "Single and Loving it." offers Christian singles tips to model as they prepare to engage in the art of building healthy Christian relationships. One important practice Pastor McVeigh suggests is to first start with self-reflection. McVeigh tells singles to do the following things: "Make yourself valuable . . . you can devote more time to sharpening your skills and developing your gifts, talents, and abilities while you are single."<sup>1</sup> To take this thought further, this researcher adds that we must learn how to be a blessing to someone else how to serve and give to someone else rather than trying to figure how the gifts, talents or resources of others can benefit us.

Although it is important for people to ensure that their mates have resources to contribute to the relationship, he/she should have something to offer the relationship that will also benefit the other person. Some people spend their whole lives chasing relationships. They are in one relationship after another, and years go by without them achieving much but only a string of failed relationships. One can be any age and experience this type of lifestyle. Additional descriptors of this type of lifestyle would include but not be limited to one who is not raising any children, has no college education,

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<sup>1</sup> Kate McVeigh, *Single and Loving It: Living Life to the Fullest* (Tulsa, Ok: Harrison House, 2003), 5.

trade or practical way to earn an honest living where one is able to afford a place to live, food and other necessities, this example is referring to this type of person.

Pastor McVeigh also reminds singles “Do not be discouraged . . . God knows how you are feeling and what it is like to be lonely at times . . . Just hang in there because His Word is working, and His best is yet to come in your life.”<sup>2</sup> According to scripture “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose”(Rom. 8:28).

Pastor McVeigh also suggests to singles:

Make God your source . . . Enjoy this season...Speak to discouragement...There are advantages to being single... You do not have to ask to do something that you want to do...If there is something you would like to buy...you do not have to ask...Marry a Boaz not a bozo...Take advantage of this time by preparing yourself for your future and your mate...We need to prepare and become like the person we’re believing for...Pray, Prepare yourself physically, look your best, Set some goals, prepare yourself financially, be kind, You really need to spend a little bit of time with someone to see if you like them or not<sup>3</sup>

These are all wonderful motivational quotes to think about and be encouraged by as a single woman. It is important for single women to stay encouraged and to have faith that the Lord in God’s timing will give you the desires of your heart according to (Psalms 37:4).

Pastor McVeigh also suggests to singles:

Guys, do not be afraid to ask a girl out just because you are afraid of being rejected...Do not take this as rejection, take it as God’s protection...find common ground in your beliefs, and make sure they are ...committed to the things of God like you...You can trust God to bring your mate to you...you do not have to go out and beat every bush trying to find the right one...The scripture makes it clear

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<sup>2</sup> McVeigh, *Single and Loving It*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> McVeigh, *Single and Loving It*, 9-106.

that we are to wait until marriage to have sex...If you already messed up 1 John 1:9 confess our sins...He is faithful...to forgive us...<sup>4</sup>

This is good advice for singles. This book is a must read for very good advice that aligns with the Word of God. This book contains numerous points and encouragement for singles.

Another good resource for Christian singles building healthy relationships is entitled *Single Married Separated Life after Divorce* by Myles Munroe. This is a very good resource for singles to read who have experienced divorce. This book is also a must read, and it lends very good advice. People have to be careful with people who are just coming out of divorce and have not had time to figure out what happened. Divorce could be truly classified as a “ripping apart two souls”<sup>5</sup> depending on how each party viewed the marriage. One really has to obtain an understanding of how people view marriage. Do they look at it as something that must work or must last for a lifetime or will they leave when things are no longer exciting for them? Please figure it out before taking the plunge. Some interesting insights gathered regarding divorce from Myles Munroe’s book that will aid in the emotional and spiritual healing of some and add to the knowledge of others is as follows:

If the unbeliever leaves, you allow him or her . . . Do not get in the way; . . . Believers do not run after them and grab their clothes. Do not call them everyday wanting to know where they have been and what they have been doing--and who with. Let them go . . . God hath called us to peace Corinthians 7:15<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> McVeigh, *Single and Loving It*, 9-106.

<sup>5</sup> Myles Munroe, *Single, Married, Separated, and Life After Divorce* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1992), 61.

<sup>6</sup> Munroe, *Single, Married, Separated*, 61.

This passage can aid in helping people who have experienced divorce to move forward with healing so that it will not get in the way of new relationships. This is a necessary step in building healthy relationships. If one is wounded and has not taken time to heal, would a person still be able to perceive situations properly? More than likely not, but people do not often take time to heal before they move forward which in my opinion is a mistake. Find out a person's dating history. A person does not want to be the one vested in a relationship with someone whose heart is closed and unable to love. Do not mistake it if a person is not careful people will waste one's time. Learn the signs of those who are emotionally unavailable and wounded. Unless the light of the Holy Spirit dwells on the inside of them, which means they are able to love and receive love run. Get out of there. If one is not careful sometimes, one may make a mistake and marry the wrong person. Try not to make a mistake in this area, one's children may pay for it. This also applies to single parents having to raise children without or with limited support from the noncustodial parent. The best situation is for children to grow up in a household with two healthy parents. Some other good insights from Myles Munroe are as follows:

Forgiveness removes any walls between you and God. Forgiveness is vertical as well as horizontal...Sometimes hurt even turns into hate, and then the devil is in the driver's seat...Proverbs 16:9 says to make your plans and God will work out your steps. Do not sit and die. Come up with another plan...Keep your focus on God...go and sin no more...On the other hand, there may be another marriage for you. But first, become truly single this time, so that you can hear the Lord about His will for you. Marriage should never be for any other motive, by either party, than for God's will. Then there will not ever be a divorce or separation...I trust the Holy Spirit, Giver of all revelation, that this book has blessed your life and will continue to do so.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Munroe, *Single, Married, Separated*, 55-128.

The statements listed above are helpful and will help singles who have experienced divorce gain emotional and spiritual healing which sets a good foundation for new relationships.

Another great resource for singles that offers helpful tips on building healthy Christian relationships was written by Pastor Van Moody entitled *The People factor: How Building Great Relationships and Ending Bad Ones Unlocks your God--Given Purpose* comes highly recommended. Some insights from this work highlighted on the subject are as follows:

Part I The Critical Laws of Relationships:

1. Healthy Relationships Must be Win--Win--the Law of Mutual Benefit
2. Be Like--Minded about What Really Matters--The Law of Agreement
3. You Can't be Friends with Everyone--The Law of Selectivity
4. Everybody has to Give--The Law of Sacrifice
5. What You Do not Know Can Hurt--The Law Against Secrets
6. Is That Person Really on Your Side?<sup>8</sup>

Pastor Moody argues "Healthy relationships do not leave people with a constant sense of losing anything, but with a healthy sense of feeling good about themselves . . . When people are in healthy relationships, they can say, this is good . . . This relationship is an extremely positive situation for me"<sup>9</sup> Good relationships in my opinion is also one of trust and peace. Moody's assessment "Your Holy Spirit will not alert you that something is wrong with your fellowship with an individual that has personal integrity"<sup>10</sup>

Pastor Moody also states in terms of being like--minded you must:

Be like minded about what really matters...I believe the first and most important question to ask yourself in every relationship is "Am I in agreement with this

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<sup>8</sup> Van Moody, *The People Factor, How Building Great Relationships and Ending Bad Ones Unlocks Your God-Given Purpose* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2014), 24.

<sup>9</sup> Moody, *The People Factor*, 24.

<sup>10</sup> Moody, *The People Factor*, 46.

person?” To be in agreement is not to simply think in similar ways or share the same opinions on good food, movies, ... sports or politics...But I am talking about the kind of agreement that comes from shared core values and beliefs, agreement that goes beneath the surface to life to the issues and attitudes that really matter...To be mutually committed to the values, foundational issues, and matters of character you regard as nonnegotiable...Asking the agreement question is best done before you enter into a relationship.<sup>11</sup>

When two people do not agree on important issues that govern the relationship it is difficult for the relationship to go long term. It is better to ensure that a person agree on issues that are important to one before one commits to a courting relationship. Pastor Moody also stated regarding this subject “Several areas of agreement are necessary to a strong, Godly relationship: faith, generosity, as opposed to selfishness, and capacity for commitment and personal integrity, which is the most critical of all . . . refuse to walk through life with people who do not possess it . . . where integrity is concerned, it is the first vital step toward healthy, purposeful alliances with people.”<sup>12</sup> These standards set forth by Pastor Moody are good points. If they are not truthful to you run. Pastor defines integrity as follows:

Integrity is critical in every type of relationship, whether is business or personal, casual or intimate. What exactly do I mean by integrity? I mean a personal commitment to what is right no matter what it cost, an unwavering dedication to truth and honesty in every area of life, and a refusal to compromise . . . It does not come and go . . . Real integrity means doing the right thing when no one is watching.<sup>13</sup>

Pastor Moody stated “You Can’t be Friends with Everyone . . . Your today dictates your tomorrow . . . The people who are in your life right now are setting the course of your next week, next month, next year, and possibly even the rest of your

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<sup>11</sup> Moody, *The People Factor*, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Moody, *The People Factor*, 47.

<sup>13</sup> Moody, *The People Factor*, 47.

life.”<sup>14</sup> “The relationships in which you’re currently involved will affect your thought patterns and the outcome of your life. “<sup>15</sup> I agree with this statement, one has to watch who one asks for advice. Make sure the person has a history of making good decisions in his/her own life and relationships. Ensure that he/she believes in Jesus Christ and is committed to God’s commandments and statutes. One has to be careful who one dates or spends time with. Never go out with someone because one wants a free meal or because of boredom. When a person meets one on one with another this gives them access to one. This could be good or a bad thing based on their intentions. Some women have experienced date rape and other unpleasant occurrences as a result of being alone with the wrong person under the guise of watching a movie.

A Dummies Guide to Sexual Purity and Dating by Darren Washington is another good resource for singles. Words of wisdom from Reverend Washington are as follows:

1. Do not chase men, because when you catch him you will continue chasing him to be responsible
2. End relationships that are not growing in a positive direction
3. Men who are dogs are not born, they are created by silly women
4. All men are not dogs, so ask God for wisdom and discernment to help you choose
5. Past relationships should teach you what you do not need based on his problems, issues and mistakes
6. Past relationships should teach you what you should aspire to become based on your problems, issues and mistakes
7. A man who does not know his purpose will waste your time
8. God would never take you away from something if he did not have something better to give you
9. Being Single is not being “Alone”

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<sup>14</sup> Moody, *The People Factor*, 82.

<sup>15</sup> Moody, *The People Factor*, 82.



10. A man will always make time for what is most important to him<sup>16</sup>

Reverend Washington gives singles some worthwhile information to consider while evaluating relationships. These helpful tips build on the foundation of building healthy relationships. Reverend Washington notes some of the dishonest character traits women should be aware of while choosing whom to date. It is very important that singles do not engage in sex before marriage because it is one of the most destructive activities one can engage in and has the most profound losses when it is done outside of the covenant of marriage between two, committed, loyal people of integrity. Reverend Washington stated the following regarding how to keep oneself pure while attempting to build healthy relationships:

1. Accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior
2. Read and study God's Word
3. Apply God's Word to your life
4. Be content in you singleness
5. Develop a desire for sexual purity
6. Keep company with supportive people
7. Keep your emotions in check
8. Put your eyes on a diet
9. Watch what you wear
10. No company at home alone
11. Be clear, uncompromising, and consistent
12. Focus on friendships
13. Avoid intimate kisses
14. No sleepovers
15. No oral sex
16. Pursue your dreams with anointing and power
17. Listen to the Holy Spirit and obey
18. Do not fight when you can run
19. Live sexual abstinence one day at a time
20. Deal with today<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Darren Washington, *A Dummies Guide to Sexual Purity and Dating The Best Sex is Saved Sex* (Gary, IN: DLW Publishing, 2009), 44.

<sup>17</sup> Washington, *A Dummies Guide*, 75.

This list of items, could keep one focused if adhered to while working to build healthy Christian fellowship or courting relationships among other believers. This book is very relevant to what one may encounter in the African American singles circles. Some women continue to make the same mistakes repeatedly in their relationships. For some reason they believe that if they do the same thing with a different person they will get a different result but this is furthest from the truth. There are some things that remain consistent throughout the courting process and that can be one's poor way of thinking. One cannot obey some of God's commandments and statutes and expect the Lord to bless their relationship. A couple has to be committed to following God's commandments. There is a reason why God does not condone sex outside of the safety of marriage. If one continues to govern one's relationships this way one will continue to have death in one's relationships because that is what happens when one does not choose life.

Stop wondering why one's relationships do not last, are shallow and emotionally unfulfilling when it has not been founded on the right things i.e. purpose, submission to God's commandments and statutes, prayer, integrity, love and being equally yoked just to name a few necessities when it comes to choosing one with whom to build a healthy relationship. If singles would look at what purpose their love interest has in common with them many relationships may have never been started. What purpose do we have in common with each another? This is a question that couples should ask.

*Foundations from Other Disciplines*

Dr. Don Raunika, a psychotherapist, wrote the next book that offers great tips for building healthy Christian relationships. Raunika's book entitled *Choosing God's Best Wisdom for lifelong romance* offers the following notable insights:

A Prescription for Failure . . . Dating prepares a couple for divorce more than marriage . . . Dating couples often develop a counterfeit oneness that feels like marriage but lacks commitment and responsibility . . . If you are involved in a relationship that you know does not honor God, He desires that you break your counterfeit oneness with that person and be one with Him. How do you do that? There isn't an easy way, but in the end the less painful way is the Band--Aid removal approach. If you had a Band--Aid on your arm, would it hurt more to rip it off in one quick pull or to peel it off a little at time? You know the answer. Many people break up slowly in order not to hurt the other person or because they feel guilty or truly do not want to break up. This causes more pain and anger in the long run . . . Do it quickly.<sup>18</sup>

Raunika also compares courtship to dating and exposes the problems with dating vs. courtship. The preferred method of building healthy relationships supported with biblical principles is through courtship. This is a must read book on how to build healthy Christian courtship. Raunika describes courtship as follows:

God--designed, one--on--one, male/female relationships with a view toward marriage. Man takes the initiative in beginning of the relationship by seeking the Lord and then the counsel of their parents. Courtship begins at an age when person is ready to get married. Courtship can begin when a man is able to maintain a home; manage finances; and be a provider, protector, and leader of a family. A woman prepares to be a helper to her husband, a mother, and a household manager. Courtship takes place mostly in the home, at church and in family activities. The man's father gives counsel and final approval to which his son is about to court; the woman's father screens and works with would--be suitors. Courtship involves progressive levels of friendship; acquaintances, casual friendship, close friendship and intimate friendship. A parent or a spiritual authority to over--see the relational development and to provide accountability for spiritual, emotional, and physical involvement is encouraged and desired.

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<sup>18</sup> Don Raunika, *Choosing God's Best Wisdom for Lifelong Romance* (Multnomah, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1998), 33-207.

Spiritual oneness is prohibited before a courtship begins among Christian singles. Emotional oneness is prohibited before the engagement period. Complete privacy is not encouraged. Engagement is not viewed as a stopgap before marriage.<sup>19</sup>

Raunika also advises Christian singles against sex before marriage and discusses the problems. Raunika also tells us how to keep our friendships Godly:

1. Keep your friendship inclusive, not exclusive. –Go out in a group.
2. Keep your friendships open, not closed--You do not need privacy.
3. Keep your friendships shoulder--to--shoulder, not face--to--face.
4. Keep your friendships nonsexual.
5. Keep your talk honoring to God.
6. Keep track of where you are on the friendship chart.
7. Keep track of how much time you spend together.<sup>20</sup>

According to scripture “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6--7). As God’s children do not worry about anything but instead bring prayer request to the Lord. God will give us peace that no one is able to understand.

The next book that has some good tried and tested tips on dating in a world of people who are not who they say they are is written by Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider entitled *All The Rules Time--surveyed Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right*. This book is also a recommended although I do not agree with all that it contains. Just because one loves the Lord and wishes to be open and transparent in one’s intentions to form healthy relationships does not mean one will not run across people who are not where one is and will seek to take advantage. One must protect oneself; knowledge is power, by

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<sup>19</sup> Raunika, *Choosing God’s Best*, 45.

<sup>20</sup> Raunika, *Choosing God’s Best*, 151-152.

following God's commandments and statutes with focus on the Ten Commandments and statutes, loving one's neighbor, and not indulging in fornication.

Some tips from the Rules are as follows:

Do not rush into sex and other rules for intimacy . . . if you feel strongly against premarital sex, you should wait until you're married. If he loves you, he'll respect whatever decision you make. But what if you enjoy sex, and denying yourself is just as hard as denying him? Does that mean you can sleep with him on the first or second date? Unfortunately, the answer is still no . . . Do not tell him what to do . . . Let him take the lead . . . Do not live with a man . . . Do not date a married man . . . Rules for dealing with rejection . . . Remember, until the ring is on your finger or you're--exclusive --by exclusive, we mean he's serious about marrying you and it's just a matter of time before he pops the question, as opposed to he's dating you until someone better comes along—you should be dating others. Nothing is better for cushioning the blow than the adoring attention of other men<sup>21</sup>

It does not matter whatever everyone else is doing they will pay for it with their flesh among other losses leading to and including death from the horrible debilitating sexually transmitted diseases that await one. If he or she loves you, if it is God's will then marry. Continue to allow yourself to be led by the Holy Spirit and stay in God's Word; follow God's commandments and statutes, this is the only way one is able to withstand the wiles of the devil.

If one chooses not to follow, God's commandments and one chooses to engage in risky behavior; may God help you to get back on the right path. Do not be fooled. There is only pain, confusion and a slow death going about relationships the worlds' way. I have met several women in relationships where they are engaging in fornication but praying the Lord will bless their relationship. What a confused mess. One has to repent of sin, turn away from it, and then follow God's commandments and statutes. A relationship

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<sup>21</sup> Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider, *All the Rules Time-Surveyed Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right* (Boston, MA: Warner Books, 1997), 78-132.

must be built on God's principles in order for God to be in it. Some aspects of this book is helpful and some aspects of this book is not very helpful.

Another book entitled *Mars and Venus on a Date* by Dr. John Gray is a good book with good dating tips I agree with and some aspects I do not recommend for Christian singles. Dr. Gray tells singles how to conduct themselves on dates. Dr. Gray advises singles to date one person at a time and to run from anyone who is dating more than one person because he or she is unable to see who one really is.<sup>22</sup> Dr. John Gray also states:

Just as Jason is making a mistake to be seeing so many women, the women who date Jason are making a big mistake as well. They are willing to have sex with him and they are not in any way being assured by him that he is exclusive. These women make the common mistake of pursuing a man more than he is pursuing them . . . A women should not behave with a man as if she is exclusive or intimate if he is still working through issues with other women . . . When a woman makes the mistake of dating a man and behaving as if she is an exclusive, intimate relationship, when in truth the man is seeing other women, then it was very difficult for the man to ever become clear and recognize her as his soul mate.<sup>23</sup>

This is helpful information on what the world is doing in the area of dating. As Christian singles, we must make it a focus not to engage in sex before marriage. No matter how many of ones friends may be engaging in this behavior, obey God's Commandments and statutes. I agree with the old wise saying that states "Why buy the cow if you can get the milk for free."

### *Summary*

In summary, before engaging in building healthy Christian courting relationships we must first know what this looks like and what activities this would not include. One

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<sup>22</sup> John Gray, *Mars and Venus on a Date A Guide for Navigating the 5 Stages of Dating to Create a Loving and Lasting Relationship* ( New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), 30.

<sup>23</sup> Gray, *Mars and Venus*, 30.

can only build healthy Christian relationships or courting experiences when both people are submitted and committed to following God's commandments and statutes. It states in God's Word that we "will know them by their fruit" in Matthew 7:16 not by what they say. Never get deceived because of what someone says or is promising but consider what actions are taking place. Only form courting relationships with those who have integrity and want the same things out of the relationship you want. For example, if you desire marriage do not try to court someone who does not desire marriage. Understand that you cannot obtain the Lord's blessings by following some of God's commandments and statutes some of the time.

Remember there are no partial blessings. People are either blessed or covered because of obedience to God, or not blessed. To receive the Lord's blessings one and one's mate must be submitted to God's commandments and statutes. Singles must choose to build healthy relationships with those one can trust and have the same core values regarding marriage and family that one does. Watch how the person talks to and treats other people. Do not rush into new relationships with anyone go--slow. Take time to observe this person overtime. Is there anyone who can speak to his character? Whenever one feels pressured stop, pray, wait and create space in the relationship until one feels at peace about moving forward. Pray for discernment, is this the right relationship for one and adjust accordingly. No one who pressures another to break one of God's commandments or statutes is a believer regardless of what he says. God's people are obedient to God's commandments and statutes according to the lessons in 1 John – 3 John. Make sure one has taken time to heal before one enters a new relationship. Seek to deepen one's relationship with God.

Some singles like to start meeting new people and prospects to build relationships without accessing where they are on a spiritual, emotional, or physical level. Ensure that one has spent some time understanding what it means to be a believer of Jesus Christ and what living life under these standards looks like. This will help with one's spiritual growth and development. Figure out what one has to offer that will bless someone else's life. Consider the blessings or consequences of moving forward in a relationship with this prospect.

Remember, the Lord wants both people to be blessed in this relationship. Some people in our culture often think in terms of what another has to offer as opposed to how they can bless someone else's life. Allow the Holy Spirit to use you and trust God to lead you in building healthy Christian relationships or courting experiences that will lay a positive foundation for healthy Christian fellowship, or relationships. Keep the peace and learn how to appreciate the other person. The courting practices described in this document should aid in improving the negative statistics that currently plague many African American relationships.

The one important action women must do to improve their relationships is to stay submissive and obedient to God's commandments and statutes and ensure that anyone she is in a relationship with is also submissive and obedient to God's commandments and statutes as a lifetime commitment and lifestyle. Whenever we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in our decision--making, concerning anything there is a positive result according to the research. Stay content and busy with God's purpose for your life. Consider God's timing of when the Lord may send you a suitable mate. A string of broken unhealthy relationships is an indication that God's timing has not matured for this area of your life.



I believe in God's timing. If it is in God's will, he will bless individuals with suitable mates and they will be equally yoked according to 2 Corinthians 6:14--17. If people rush into relationships because they are not patient, they will not receive God's best for their lives and relationships. In the meantime, practice contentment and fellowship with other believers as you do God's work.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PROJECT ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

This ministry model was designed to educate and inform women to make better relationship choices that will lay a positive foundation for healthy Christian relationships at Central Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Many women at Central desire to learn more about the art of building healthy relationships in hopes of obtaining a relationship that is healthy and beneficial to both parties involved. Due to the current state of too many of our relationships there is a need for intervention.

The impact of the four foundation papers which consist of the Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Theoretical papers along with the Synergy paper have been integrated into the ministry model which is designed to educate women on making better relationship choices as a way of promoting healthy Christian fellowship, or courting practices that will lay a positive foundation for healthy Christian relationships

For the purpose of this study the foundational scriptural references are based on Titus 2:1--5 and Ruth 3:1--6. According to scripture Naomi wanted security for her daughter--in--law Ruth (Ruth 3:1--6). Through Ruth's obedience to her mother--in--law's instruction and guidance, she will gain security through Boaz and be able to preserve the names of their dead husbands and Naomi's other son.

The New Testament scripture reviewed to sustain this project is from Titus 2:1--5.

A brief description of the story that unfolds in Titus details how Paul has left Titus to put churches in order, and assign elders to the areas where they have started new ministries in the City of Crete (Titus 1:5--6). Paul is not in jail at this time and is currently ministering to believers in another town. Paul also has given Titus a set of directions to follow as he is choosing the elders and setting up places where believers can come to worship (v. 6)

During this time, there is a great deal of sin among the people because they are not familiar with God's Law and statutes. Titus 2:1--15 over--all is setting a standard of living and values for older men, women, younger men, and women to live by. Paul instructed Titus to teach the older women "Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self--controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited" (Titus 2:3--5).

From the Historical Foundations Paper we learned the history of relationships in American as well as in the African American community. We learned how African Americans formed relationships and married during slavery times and the various influences these past practices may have on our current courting practices. In summary, there were challenges when slaves wanted to marry other slaves. African American relationships were interfered with by their slave masters and were not oftentimes recorded or respected. Today, due to the books, plays, music, movies and other outside influences marriages are now at an all--time low and the dating culture has shifted into various directions due to outside influences. We must create positive courting practices to

support our quest to change our dating culture back to an environment where singles have positive intentions toward each other and do not seek to just serve or please themselves.

As a result of the negative external influences the rate of single parent homes, sexually transmitted diseases and abortion rates have increased. Knowing this information as a result of researching the History of our African American relationships tells me that this ministry model must involve the Holy Spirit to address the reason the people have turned to such destructive measures when it comes to our relationships.

In terms of the Theological Foundations paper one learns the role of the Holy Spirit. This ministry model will educate and inform but it is the Holy Spirit that will lead women into all truth according to (John 16:13). In *Minding the Good Ground* Jason E. Vickers notes:

Prophetic leaders and movements that have emerged are reaching a large majority of our church members across the world. These preachers are not necessarily affiliated with any of our popular denominations. These new ministries are reaching and attracting many of our members because they are able to minister to, fill in the gaps, and address with biblical support many of the issues our members are currently experiencing doing away with a lot of our traditional church structures or the way we conduct our worship services in the process Vickers notes.<sup>1</sup>

Church renewal or building up members in the things of the Lord, Vickers states, “through prayer and help from the Holy Spirit together these new ministries and our churches are able to work together for the good of God’s people serving them, administering the sacraments and becoming one unified body in Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup> Vickers explains this as “incorporation into the Trinitarian life of God”.<sup>3</sup> With help from the Holy

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<sup>1</sup> Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground*, 73.

<sup>2</sup> Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground*, 73-99.

<sup>3</sup> Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground*, 101-107.

Spirit, believers are able to turn away from the sin that is producing negative relationships in our communities.

It is through our relationship with Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit that we receive contentment and fulfillment. This is the reason pneumatology is the supporting theology for this research project. If we keep a close relationship with Christ which means the Holy Spirit lives on the inside of us, we would not do the actions that produce so many negative relationships within our communities. With the love of the Holy Spirit living on the inside of us we would not be led by our flesh and loneliness to fall into unhealthy relationships and sexual sins. The ministry model will inform, but it is the Holy Spirit that will bring about the change.

The Theoretical paper provided information on any existing ministry models or other resources that will support the design of the ministry model to be implemented at Central CME Church. Although the need for companionship is something many people desire, there are exceptions. We do not always set the proper foundation for our relationships to be positive, safe, honest, and a blessing for all parties involved. In view of the negative state of many of our African American relationships, there is a need for us to revisit some relationship practices that have worked in the past. New relationship strategies must also be considered because of the shifts that have taken place specifically within our African American culture that are causing many of our families to experience the negative outcomes people experience when relationships have not been established with a healthy Christian foundation. People can only do what they know or what they have seen modeled. We are limited by our experience. Increasing awareness and offering positive Christian courtship strategies should result in healthier relationships.

I believe it is at Central CME Church that I am to learn and teach certain aspects of building healthy relationships. I will need to complete the pieces of the puzzle that will answer this question for many who desire healthy courting relationships during a time and age where the culture is promoting broken relationships as opposed to healthy Christian fellowships and courtships. It is at this point that there is a blessing for me as well as my context in terms of what the Holy Spirit has planned.

Based on the research gathered I determined that this ministry model could educate and inform women on the art of making better relationship choices as evidenced by the results of the pre and post--surveys, interviews and feedback from the focus group meetings of the participants. I believe that by one woman at a time, the negative culture of many African American courting or dating relationships will change in a positive direction, as women learn and reflect on the positive courting alternatives provided during the revival and focus group sessions. Women will influence men as men are trained in similar ministries in the art of building healthy courting relationships.

### **Methodology**

The model of ministry used to conduct this research was a mixed method approach. According to Creswell, “Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”.<sup>4</sup> According to Creswell “quantitative research is a means for surveying objective theories by examining the relationship among variables . . . These variables, in turn, can be

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<sup>4</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 4.

measured, typically on instructions, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures.”<sup>5</sup> Creswell also states:

Mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms. “It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study. Thus, it is more than simply collecting and analyzing both kinds of data; it involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research.”<sup>6</sup>

To validate the ministry model pre--and post--surveys were given to participants after each ministry session. Three revivals were hosted at Central CME Church, and three focus group meetings were held at the Southfield Public Library where interviews were conducted. According to Creswell, to add validity to a study one must “Triangulate different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes . . . If themes are established based on converging . . . perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study.”<sup>7</sup>

A mixed method approach was modeled and performed by using a grounded theory as the research framework. According to Creswell “Grounded theory is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants”. Creswell also stated that: This process involves using multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information (Charmax, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998). Two primary characteristics of this design are the constant comparison of data

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<sup>5</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*, 191.

with emerging categories and theoretical sampling of different groups to maximize the similarities and the differences of information.

This strategy works with the type of data gathered and utilized for this research project. Allowing singles to breakout to discuss various topics will also provide great feedback. To survey the participants who attended the revival at the conclusion of each session will also provide great feedback in terms of whether participants felt informed. Three additional focus group meetings were also held to further discussions and gather post--survey data. The structure of the focus group meetings and data process were as follows:

#### *Format of Singles Focus Group Sessions*

- Prayer (to include invocation, and guidance for singles)
- Purpose of Single Women's Focus Group Sessions

#### *Ice Breaker*

- Data Collection (Optional-- pre--survey Questions to understand audience)
- Topics for Discussion: (Take fifteen minutes to educate, inform and set the
- Atmosphere and provide information on the topics below)
- How will you know? The selection Process and the Role of the Holy

#### *Spirit (First night)*

- Good Advice and Bad Advice (Second Session)
- Encouraging Healthy Christian Courtships setting a Strong Foundation for Healthy Relationships (Second Session)
- What does a Healthy Relationship look like and other Influences



- Courting vs. Dating to include Courting Tips (Third session)
- Contentment and God's Timing (Third session)
- Discussion: (Guided, ask for questions or feedback regarding topics discussed that evening...Let your audience talk and learn from one other)
- Data Collection (Optional-- post--survey questions to understand if the audience feels educated or informed in regards to the topics reviewed above or if they would like to discuss other topics)

### *Evaluation*

As stated before a mixed method approach was used to collect data, which has been designed by the researcher. The methodologies are listed in more detail as follows:

1. Pre and Post surveys were handed out with the bulletins as participants entered the church.
2. Interviews were also conducted to collect data in the area of African American dating or courting relationships conducted at the library.
3. Surveys were collected from the focus groups to gain information in regards to participant feedback on the information provided by the revivals at the library and after the revivals.

Interviews were held to gather data and feedback. During the last focus group session steps needed to set--up a Christian Singles Ministry, as a way to continue to develop and grow singles in the area of developing healthy Christian fellowship and courting practices was outlined for future review.

### **Implementation**

Pre-- and post--surveys were given to twenty women, who before the first revival, committed to attending all six sessions and had agreed to participate in this study. There were three revival sessions geared toward providing information and three focus group sessions geared toward discussing in more detail information learned at the revivals contained within the six sessions noted below.

During the first session, I preached a short sermon about thirty minutes in length on the mate selection process, courting vs. dating and games to lookout for during the courting process. I gave my own testimony regarding relationships and how I am a divorced woman desiring to be married again. Women were reminded that following God's commandments and statutes protects one and guides one through this life. Not following God's commandments will open one up to difficult trials as a result of making bad choices. There is a difference between courting and dating. The difference between courting and dating is that courting is done out in the open and the parties seek to protect one another from any sexual harm or damage. There is damage done anytime these acts are performed outside of the covenant of a healthy marriage. These points were discussed during the sermon. Some helpful notes came from the book *The Black Christian Singles Guide to Dating and Sexuality*, Chris Jackson stated the following points on the issue of sex before marriage:

Three primary ways of communicating intimacy and sexuality are physically, emotionally, and spiritually . . . When our sexual relationship is only one--dimensional, it is much more likely to break when pressure is applied . . . In the book *Sexual Character*, Marva Dawn exposes what happens when sexual union is overemphasized as opposed to the development of the whole relationship: . . . Because deep inside we know that our lives are less intimate than they need to be, we try to create that intimacy, but we do not know how to do it any other ways than through technique . . . Since it then has no corresponding

intimacies improvements must deal with the very act, itself, . . . The true source of pain has not been diagnosed.<sup>8</sup>

During the second session, the Pastor of Central CME Church, one of my professional associates, focused on the role of the Holy Spirit in our courting lives and offered courting tips. During the third session, the Elder of our CME Detroit and Mid--Michigan District preached a short sermon reminding women that they are to be respected in their relationships and that they are not Lilly pads to be jumped on the way frogs behave in ponds. After each short sermon nightly, the participants filled out surveys giving their feedback regarding the revival sessions. Each night, participants had the opportunity to participate in a question and answer session, before the short sermon. Revival participants said that they really enjoyed sharing their questions and perspectives with each other. After the sermon, participants had the opportunity to come to the altar for prayer. They were offered an opportunity for salvation, to join the church, or to re--dedicate their lives to Christ. Many came to the altar for prayer or to re--dedicate their lives to Christ. On the last night of the revival, major points of focus were summarized and salvation was offered to those who wanted salvation.

During the third through fifth sessions, practical courting tips and ways of relating were presented. Discussions about common dating pitfalls and challenges, as well as the Holy Spirits' role in aiding women to make better relationship choices was reviewed. The purpose of building healthy Christian relationships or courting experiences was highlighted, along with good and bad choices in choosing a mate.

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<sup>8</sup> Christ Jackson, *The Black Christian Singles Guide to Dating and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 58.

The final session recapped and summarized the earlier sessions and concluded with reiterating practical courting tips and various ways of relating. The final session also restated the need for women to rely on the direction and covering provided by the Holy Spirit. The importance of contentment while waiting for the best person to court was also reviewed with participants. It is through contentment that mistakes are minimized and other emotional traumas that can occur while dating the wrong person. Practical courting tips and direction from the Holy Spirit will lead, educate and inform women to make better relationship choices that will lead to healthy Christian fellowships and relationships.

The project calendar, pre and post survey questions, training materials, as well as some helpful tools used to gather data on study participants are listed on the next pages and in the appendix. To report results clearly all questions were not used in the final charts created for this study. Some of the pre and post survey questions were designed to also serve as discussion questions for study participants. When one begins a new relationship certain questions must be asked to ensure one shares similar values and expectations for the relationship. Some of these questions are good for this purpose.

### *Project Calendar*

Timeline: August 2014 – February 2015

- Meet with mentors, study participants, and context associates
- Discuss implementation timeline and logistics
- Sink calendars for six sessions the revival/groups can meet
- Assign tasks needed to complete revivals

- Assign context associates or mentors to study sessions
- Identify twenty female participants to participate in the study
- Timeline: November, 2014 -- February, 2015 Project Implementation – Phase V
- Set a date (November 2014 -- February 2015) for six revival/study sessions to be hosted at Central CME Church or Library
- Revival Titles:
  - Encouraging Healthy Christian Courtship and Relationships – Part I thru Part VI
  - Assign task (Flyers, bulletin, security, offering, pre--survey collection, ushers, ministers, mentors, building logistics)

#### *Format of Singles Revival Sessions*

- Call to Worship with Special Liturgy
- Prayer (to include invocation, and guidance for singles)
- Scripture (Ruth 3:1--6, Titus 2:1--5)
- Purpose of Single Women's Sessions
- Question and Answer Session (Guided, ask for questions or feedback regarding topics being discussed that evening. Keep answers according to the Word of God)
- Musical Selection (Songs related to the topic)
- Introduction of Speaker
- The Message: (Thirty minutes six sessions to educate, inform and set the atmosphere on the topics listed below)
  - How will you know? The selection process and the role of the Holy Spirit
  - Good Advice and Bad Advice

- Encouraging Healthy Christian Courtships setting a Strong Foundation for Healthy Relationships
- What does a Healthy Relationship look like and other Influences
- Courting vs. Dating to include Courting Tips
- Contentment and God's Timing
- Invitation to Christian Discipleship and or Altar Call
- Doxology/Benediction

Note: Participants will then complete surveys on their experience and suggestions for future meetings or topics to be considered

*Pre--Survey and Post Survey Questions*

1. What is your nationality ? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your gender? Please circle Male or Female
3. Please circle your age group 13--17, 18--21, 22--30, 31--37, 38--45, 46--49, 50--59, 60+
4. Do you desire to be married one day? Circle Yes or No
5. What do you think the marriage rate is among African Americans? 50%, 32%, or 60%.
6. How do you think marriage is viewed among African American males?  
Favorable, Unfavorable, Not really necessary, Why

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7. How do you think marriage is viewed amongst African American females?

Favorable, Unfavorable, Not really necessary,

Why \_\_\_\_\_

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8. How do you view sex in relationships outside of the commitment of marriage?

Favorable, Unfavorable, Why \_\_\_\_\_

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9. List your five top relationship needs or what you expect from a healthy Christian relationship, fellowship, courting, or experience.

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10. Do you communicate what your needs or expectations are in your courting or dating relationships? Circle Yes or No

11. Do you expect the person you are courting or dating to know what your needs or expectations are in a courting or dating relationship?

Circle Yes or No

12. What do you think the top five relationship needs are for men or women?

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13. Do you feel informed or educated in regards to courting?

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14. How do your top five needs or expectations differ in marriage vs. in a courting?

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15. Is it important for your companion to have similar beliefs in terms of moral, spiritual, or family values? Yes \_\_\_\_ or No \_\_\_\_
16. If so, how do you check or survey their beliefs?
17. Family is a very important part of our American heritage. \_\_\_\_True or \_\_\_\_False
18. It is important for each parent to participate in raising children even if you are not married. \_\_\_\_True or \_\_\_\_False or other\_\_\_\_
19. It is important to marry if you have a child together. \_\_\_\_Agree, \_\_\_\_Disagree or Agree \_\_\_\_ if so on what? \_\_\_\_
20. What qualities do you look for in someone you would consider for marriage?  
(Circle your top three must haves or add your own suggestion): love, commitment, belief in Jesus Christ and submission to God, attractive spouse, giver, taker, intelligent, funny, charming, financial security, similar moral values, similar childhood family structure, good parents, good family support system, good credit, positive character, wisdom, street wise, cool, sexy, aggressive, humble, gentle, kind or other \_\_\_\_\_
21. What do you expect to get out of this singles conference?

### **Summary of Learning**

The hypothesis supported using this ministry model designed to educate and inform women on the state of our African American relationships and offer positive alternatives on how to court has been supported by the data collected. A mixed method approach has been used to validate the ministry model using pre and post surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings. Three single women's revivals, and three focus group meetings have been held to provide information and gather data. As a result,



women believed they were more educated and informed on the art of making better relationship choices that will lead to healthy Christian courting experiences. Feedback was also received from married women who attended the revivals who stated if they had known this information before getting married, they would have not chosen their current mate. I understand this feeling, which is one of the reasons why I decided to choose this topic because if I had this information before choosing I would not have made the choices I have made in the past. If I can help myself and others make better choices, going forward then this work is not in vain.

The alternatives offered in summary point women back to lessons taught regarding relationships in the Bible. The model also has educated women on very basic concepts in terms of God's commandments and statutes. Two commandments in particular which according to Jesus are the greatest two commandments when asked by a lawyer according to scripture it states:

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:35--40).

When people adhere to these two commandments, they will treat others with love and have their best interests under consideration at all times. When one loves, God to the extent of the law one will follow God's commandments and statutes. Love to God is shown in our obedience to God's commandments according to 1 John 5:1--5. it states the following in regards to how we show our love to God:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is

love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 5: 1--5 [NIV]).

When these insights are observed we can begin to enjoy healthy relationships with one another considering these deep principles of how God has instructed people to live this life. There are reasons that these commandments were provided as a framework for how we are to govern ourselves when in relationships. Although all have sinned and there are no perfect people continuing to repent of sin, love God and love one another will help us build healthy Christian relationships. There are so many negative accounts of the consequences on families and children when these principles are not observed.

Evaluating this project, other data gathered as well as the pre and post--survey results of the twenty female participants committed to the project was compared for similarities and differences on how they answered the same questions before and after the single's revivals. The expected results of the project are to raise the awareness or educate women on the state of African American relationships and offer tips on making better--informed choices. The purpose was also for women to discover that successful relationships are a result of one truly submitting to the direction of the Holy Spirit as well as loving, and receiving fulfillment by strengthening one's relationship with Jesus Christ. One must believe Jesus to be their source of joy and contentment in order to begin to create relationships worth being a part of. Women must also make sure that the man they intend to court also has a strong relationship with Jesus Christ. The design of this project will certainly plant the thought of these goals.

According to Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead in the book entitled *You and Your Action Research Project* the authors stated the following regarding questions or the

surveys one may choose to ask participants, which will spark reflection on the part of the participant. Based on the type of questions asked, some people will try to come up with the answer they think you may want to hear. Whitehead and McNiff stated that:

Questionnaires . . . First-time researchers often rush into producing questionnaires without sufficiently considering what is involved. This can be dangerous. Issuing a questionnaire is a political act because questionnaires are not neutral. They can influence their respondents and alert them to ideas they had not thought about before. If you send a questionnaire to parents asking if their children are being bullied at school, they may get the idea that bullying is occurring.<sup>9</sup>

Participants of the study completed surveys. The question of whether participants felt informed or educated because of the study sessions was asked. The Ministry Model also allowed participants in the study to discuss during the focus group meetings their belief of when they felt they trusted the direction provided by the Holy Spirit, vs. when they did not follow direction from the Holy Spirit and the outcome of those experiences.

Twenty committed female participants, as noted by support of the pre and post--surveys, interviews and focus group meetings, were educated and informed on the art of building healthy courting relationships because of the information shared at the revival and focus group meetings. I was not surprised that some of their post responses had changed because of the information gained during the revivals and focus group meetings. Results from the surveys, interviews and other data collected during the revival or focus group sessions are listed on the charts that follow:

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<sup>9</sup> Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead, *You and Your Action Research Project 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2010), 161.

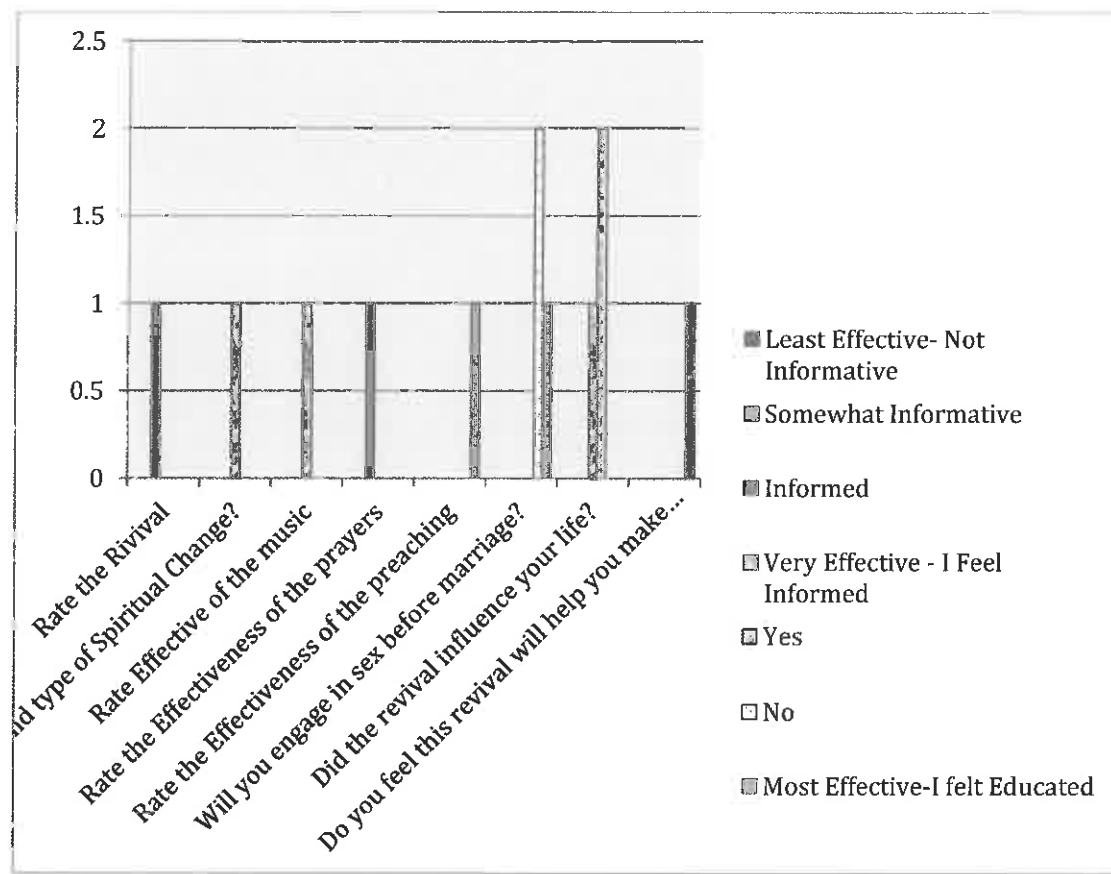


Chart One

Chart one survey results show participants either felt informed, in response to issues addressed during the first revival and focus group sessions or thought the sessions were very effective. Two of the highest bars indicated a majority of the women were not going to engage in sex before marriage and that the revival influenced their lives.

Results from the surveys, interviews and other data collected during the revival or focus groups sessions with a focus on issues covered on the second night of the revival, the topics included: Encouragement for God's Women, Setting Healthy Relationship Boundaries and You are not a Lilly Pad preached by our Elder at Central CME Church survey results are listed as follows:

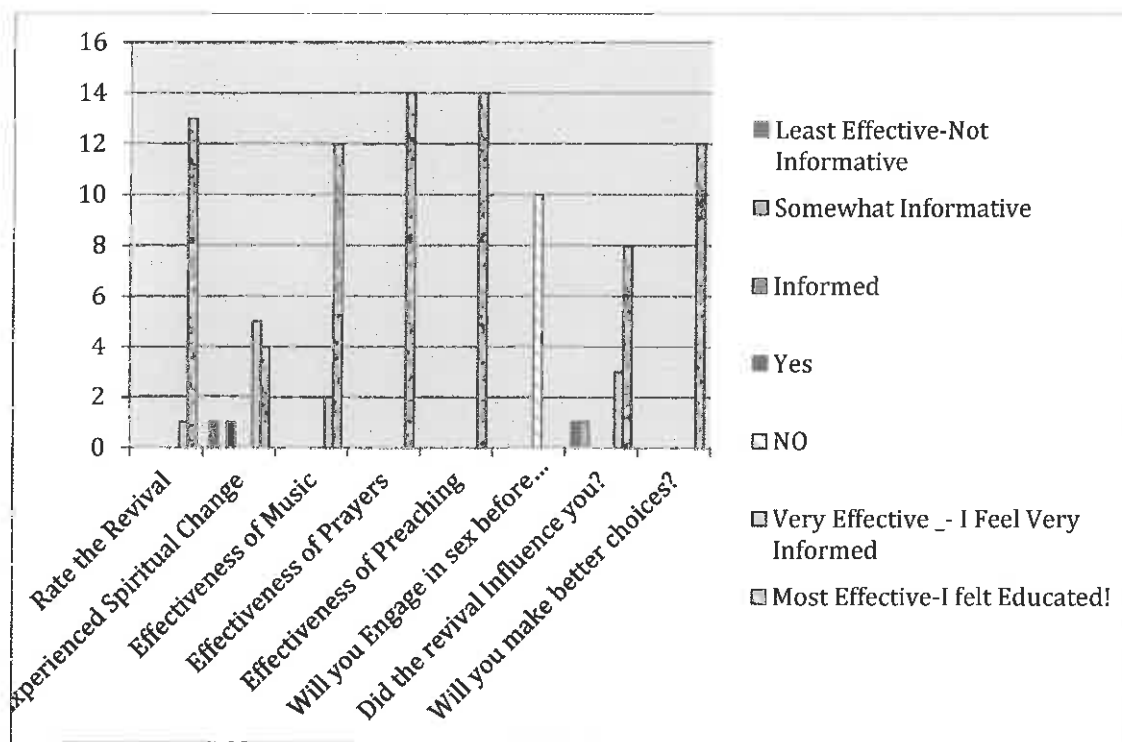


Chart Two

Chart two shows the majority of the participants felt the revival and focus group conversations were most effective and they felt educated in term of relating and courting. Most of the participants also stated they would not engage in sex before marriage, which is great.

Results from the surveys, interviews and other data collected during the revival or focus groups with a focus on issues covered on the third night of the revival preached by me, topics included: A recap and summary of the earlier sessions and concluded with reiterating practical courting tips and various ways of relating and courting. The final revival also reiterated the need for women to rely on the direction and covering from the Holy Spirit and to follow God's commandments and statutes in terms of how we are to live this life. The importance of contentment while waiting for the best person to court was also reviewed. Survey results are listed below:

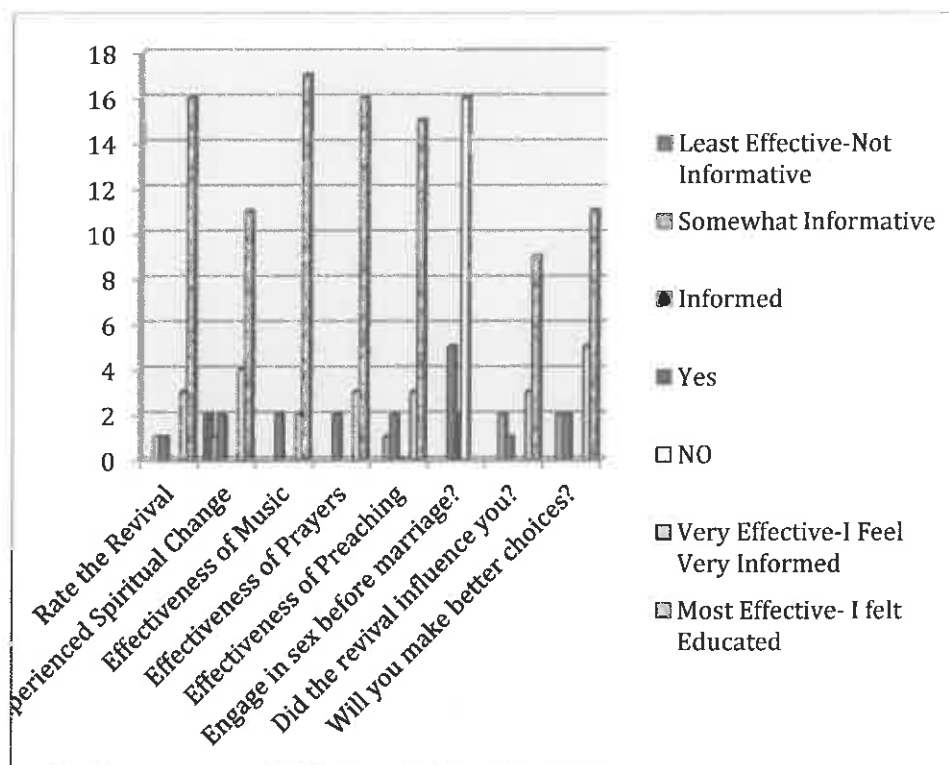


Chart Three

Chart three also shows most of the participants thought that the revivals, focus group conversations etc. were most effective and they felt educated. I was among some intelligent women who were able to enlighten the group on several points in terms of building healthy Christian relationships.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this singles ministry model educated and informed women on the art of creating healthy courting relationships as well as the current state of our African American relationships. According to the data, positive and lasting changes in the courting practices of women at Central CME as well as the surrounding community will continue to improve. Women, the focus of this study, will help other women learn how to

make better relationship choices, which will lead to healthy Christian fellowship, or courting practices that will set a strong foundation for healthy Christian courting relationships. Women will influence the men about expectations to be observed in courting relationships as they learn and participate in similar ministries designed to build healthy relationships and strengthen families.

The expected results of the project is that by one woman at a time the negative culture of some of our African American relationships and courting activities will change in a positive direction, as a result of the positive courting alternatives provided during the revival and focus group sessions. This practice must continue all across the world. When mature women or women with experience on this subject are able to share their courting experiences with women with less experience it will hopefully, enable less experienced women to make better relationship choices as a result, of what they have learned through reflection and discussion with other women. This practice should be God centered and based on biblical principles or all is lost.

Relationships built on things other than the love of God are just relationships without the proper foundation needed to withstand the test of time. One has to pray for discernment before one choses who to move forward in relationship with. I hope that the tips contained within this document will continue to help singles during their journey. In the meantime, enjoy your singleness if you are single. Find the blessing and purpose in being single. Singles must remember there is nothing wrong with the desire to be married or have a relationship, but we must engage in healthy Christian fellowship or courting activities to achieve a healthy courtship. It is only when we do not rely on direction from

the Holy Spirit as the first source of our happiness, and contentment, that we find ourselves in relationships, which lack balance and are not healthy.

I believe this project worked very well. The focus of this project targeted Christian women and their thoughts about dating and I was able to get a great deal of feedback from women in this demographic. I learned many strive to follow God's commandments but may fall short for various reasons. Some single women are able to be focused and successful in their effort to remain abstinent until marriage. These women reported the most fulfillment and contentment.

For future work, what would make this project better would be to receive feedback from Christian men and women. Twenty each would be sufficient and then complete the same process with feedback from both groups. The underlining question would include how to keep our courting experiences God centered?

For the purpose of this study, and due to time constraints men were not included in the ministry model but a better design would be to add men to the ministry model so that men and women can grow together in terms of how to build healthy courting relationships. Both would hear new ways at the same time on how to relate to and court in a healthier manner. Men and women could learn and become informed on the art of gaining new spiritual and emotional understanding on how to build healthy relationships. Being both submitted and obedient to God's commandments, statutes, and having this practice, as the foundation of their relationship will aid couples in building healthier relationships.



**APPENDIX A**  
**PROGRAM FOR WORKSHOPS AND SURVEY**

Building Healthy Courting  
Relationships A Workshop for  
Single Women

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Central CME Church  
7600 Tireman, Detroit, Mi. 48204  
Phone (313) 931-0592

Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Havis, Host Pastor

Ministry Model designed by Reverend Edwina  
Hill as required by The United Theological  
Seminary Doctorate of Ministry Program.  
Phone: 248 773-6558, email: [ehill1@united.edu](mailto:ehill1@united.edu)

**Order of Service**  
**January 21-23, 2015**  
**6:30 PM**

◊ **Call to Worship with Special Liturgy**

LEADER: WE CELEBRATE THE WOMEN OF TODAY.  
 WE HONOR THOSE THAT SEEK TO SUBMIT TO GOD'S  
 COMMANDMENTS AND STATUTES THROUGH HER  
 THOUGHTS, WORDS AND DEEDS.

ALL: WE PRAISE GOD FOR THE VIRTUOUS WOMEN  
 WHO PERSEVERED THROUGH OUR YESTERDAYS, IN-  
 FLUENCE OUR TODAYS, AND SHAPE OUR TOMOR-  
 ROWS. FROM THE RIB OF MAN GOD CREATED WOMAN.  
 GOD'S CREATION IS MAN'S TESTIMONY OF GOD'S  
 NEVER-ENDING LOVE, GRACE, AND MERCY FOR HIS  
 CHILDREN

◊ **PRAYER**

◊ **SCRIPTURE READING**

◊ **PURPOSE OF SINGLE WOMEN'S REVIVAL**

◊ **MUSICAL SELECTION**

◊ **OFFERING**

◊ **MUSICAL SELECTION**

◊ **THE MESSAGE BY:**

REVEREND DR. PATRICIA HAVIS- WEDNESDAY

ELDER DR. PHILIP D. WASHINGTON- THURSDAY

REVEREND EDWINA M. HILL- FRIDAY

◊ **INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP**

◊ **BENEDICTION**

**Courting Tips**

- "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Mat. 6:33)
- Stay in Prayer
- Ensure you are both equally yoked and submitted to Christ —To determine this do not go by what people say but what they do! (2 Cor. 6:14)
- Learn what a healthy courting relationship looks like and what activities this will and will not include.
- One should court not date there is a difference. The process of courtship seeks to **avoid many of the pitfalls that often exist in dating relationships**, which are frequently focused on the selfish pleasures of gaining entertainment or sensual gratification. A man and woman engaged in dating often do not share a long-range goal for their relationship. The couple is often seeking personal pleasure, and consequently they do not assume proper responsibility for their behavior toward one another. (See 2 Timothy 2:22.) (From the Institute of Basic Life Principles)
- Stay submitted and obedient to God's commandments and statutes. Anyone you engage in a relationship with must also be submitted and obedient to God's commandments and statutes as a lifetime commitment and lifestyle. Whenever we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in our decision making concerning anything it will be a positive result. (John 16:13, Rom. 8:14, Eph. 4:3, 2:14-18, 4:30-32)

- It states in God's Word that we will know them by their fruit not by what they say. Never get hung up on what someone is saying or promising only what they produce. (Matt. 7:20)
- Form courting relationships with those who have integrity, you can trust, have the same family values and want the same things out of the relationship you want. For example, if you desire marriage do not try to court someone who does not desire marriage. (Prov. 2:7, Prov. 10:9, Ps. 41:12)
- Understand that you cannot obtain the Lord's blessings by following some of God's commandments and statutes some of the time. Remember there are no partial blessings. You are either blessed or covered as a result of your obedience to God or not as a result of disobedience. Repent and rededicate your life to Jesus Christ! (Joshua 1:8, Ps. 37:4)
- Stay in the open when courting and involve family and friends or your pastor as accountability partners. This is needed to keep the integrity of the relationship and keep it moving along.
- Whenever you feel pressured stop, pray, wait and create space in the relationship until you feel at peace about moving forward or not. Anyone who pressures you to break one of God's commandments or statutes is not a believer regardless of what they say. God's people are obedient to God's commandments and statutes. (Read 1 John—3 John)
- Make sure you have taken time to heal before you enter new relationships. Seek to deepen your relationship with God. A lot of singles like to start meeting new people and prospects to build relationships without accessing where they are on a spiritual, emotional or physical level. (Ps. 147:3, John 14:27, James 5:13)
- Is God's purpose supported in the relationship? Allow yourself time to get things in order.

## REVIVAL EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY

*Please rate scale from 1--5.  
Five is the most effective and one is the least.*

1. Overall how would you rate the revival?

1\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_\_ 4\_\_\_\_ 5\_\_\_\_

2. Did you experience any type of spiritual change?

1\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_\_ 4\_\_\_\_ 5\_\_\_\_

3. Rate the effectiveness of the music.

1\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_\_ 4\_\_\_\_ 5\_\_\_\_

4. Rate the effectiveness of the prayers.

1\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_\_ 4\_\_\_\_ 5\_\_\_\_

5. Rate the effectiveness of the preaching.

1\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_\_ 4\_\_\_\_ 5\_\_\_\_

6. Will you engage in sex before marriage while you are dating/courting?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ or No \_\_\_\_\_

7. How much did the revival influence your life?

1\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_\_ 4\_\_\_\_ 5\_\_\_\_

8. Do you feel this revival will help you make better relationship choices please explain?

1\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_\_ 4\_\_\_\_ 5\_\_\_\_

Comments if any regarding the revival. (Use the back if necessary)

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Name (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**  
**COURTING TIPS**

### **Courting Tips to Ponder**

- Learn what a healthy relationship looks like and what activities this would not include. One can only build Healthy Christian Relationships or courting experiences when both people have similar expectations.
- It states in God's Word that we will know them by their fruit not by what they say. Never get hung up on what someone is saying or promising only what they produce. Only form relationships with those who have integrity and want the same things out of the relationship you want. For example, if you desire marriage do not try to court or date someone who does not desire marriage or other values important to you.
- Understand that you cannot obtain the Lord's blessings by following some of God's commandments and statutes some of the time. Remember there are no partial blessings. You are either blessed or covered as a result of your obedience to God or not as a result of disobedience. Repent and correct any mishaps.
- To receive the Lord's blessings you and your mate must be submitted to God's commandments and statutes together.
- Choose to build healthy relationships with those you can trust and have the same core values in regards to marriage and family that you do.
- Watch how they talk to and treat other people. Do they do what they say they will do?
- Do not rush into new relationships with anyone go slow.
- Take time to observe this person overtime. Is there anyone who can speak to his character?
- Whenever you feel pressured stop, pray, wait and create space in the relationship until you feel at peace about moving forward. Anyone that pressures you to break one of God's commandments or statutes is not a believer regardless of what they say. God's people are obedient to God's commandments and statutes. (Read 1 John—3 John)
- Pray for discernment in terms of whether this is the right relationship for you and adjust accordingly.
- Make sure you have taken time to heal before you enter new relationships. Seek to deepen your relationship with God. A lot of singles like to start meeting new people and prospects to build relationships without accessing where they are on a spiritual, emotional or physical level.
- Ensure you have spent sometime understanding what it means to be a believer of Jesus Christ and what living life under these standards looks like it does not include pre--

marital sex and other sins. This will help with one's spiritual growth and development.

- Figure out what you have to offer that will bless someone else's life. Make sure they are a blessing to you and your family! If you are unemployed, or cannot financial support yourself, have emotional or spiritual issues this is not the right time for you to court. Many people in our culture often think in terms of what someone else has to offer them as suppose to how they can bless someone else's life.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to dwell within you and trust God to lead you in Building Healthy Christian Courting Relationships. In the mean time celebrate life and pray for contentment.
- Keep the peace and learn how to appreciate the other person. Consider God's timing and be patient.
- To improve their relationships women must stay submitted and obedient to God's commandments and statutes and also ensure that anyone she engages in a relationship with is also submitted and obedient to God's commandments and statutes as a lifetime commitment and lifestyle. Whenever we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in our decision making concerning anything it will be a positive result.
- Fulfill God's purpose for your life or discover what your purpose or contribution to this life entails and work at these things.



**APPENDIX C**  
**CHRISTIAN COURTSHIP HANDOUTS**

## Courtship for Christians

### *Handouts for Discussion and Reflection*

Group prayers: These prayers are designed to set the atmosphere for the meeting. Another great way to start this meeting is with everyone joining in prayer until the facilitator starts the meeting. Remind singles to pray God's Word over their lives.

Father, I thank you that you have a great plan for my life, and You are bring it to pass in Your perfect timing. I refuse to worry or be discouraged, because you have started a good work in me, and You are faithful to complete it. You have not forgotten about me or changed Your mind about my divine destiny. I believe that You are ordering my steps and that I am walking out Your best plan for me. I know that all things are working together for my good because I love You, and I am called according to Your purpose.<sup>1</sup>

Father, You are the Source of my joy and security. I do not have to look to other people for fulfillment or happiness. Your Holy Spirit lives in me, so every need in my life can be met, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I bathe my spirit in Your Word so that I know who I am in Christ Jesus, and I am complete in Christ Jesus. You are my light, my salvation and my strength!<sup>2</sup>

*Purpose: To share our thoughts on Christian courtship from a Biblical perspective:*

These questions are designed for women to discuss and reflect on the answers. The facilitator must keep the conversations Biblically based.

1. Am I ready spiritually, emotionally, financially etc. for a relationship?
2. Have I healed from past disappointments?
3. Are my children at a place where I am able to divert time away from caring for them to start a new relationship?
4. Can I be a blessing to someone else? Can they be a blessing to my children and I?
5. Are they able to commit? Are you able to commit? (Matt. 19:5, Gen. 2:24, Heb. 13:4)
6. What does commitment mean to you? (Matt. 6:21, Luke 12:34)

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<sup>1</sup> McVeigh, *Single and Loving It*, 122.

<sup>2</sup> McVeigh, *Single and Loving It*, 123.

7. Attraction: It is a natural response but do not get hung up on the way someone looks, smells, dresses or talks. Notes: You cannot judge a book by the cover. Consider if this man is submitted to God's law as a life style. Are you submitted to God's commandments? Consider if this man is emotionally, spiritually, or financially fit for fellowship or courtship. Can anyone tell you about his character? Who are his friends? What is his purpose? How does he treat others as well as you? How many relationships has he enjoyed in the past? How have past relationships affected him?

8. Moral and Spiritual Values: Do you share the same moral and spiritual values? Are you both believers of Jesus Christ? Are there other cultural differences that must be considered? How will the Holy Spirit aid one in one's quest to develop healthy courting relationships. During the course of fellowship these differences should be considered, noticed and discussed for clarity. (2 Cor. 6:14--15, Deut. 7:3--4, Eph. 5:3, 1 Cor. 10:13, 1 Cor. 6:18)

9. Expectations: Do you share the same expectations for the relationship? Notes: You expect presents on your birthday or major holidays. He says he does not celebrate birthdays or major holidays and believes it is just a way for businesses to make money off of people. Would you be ok in a relationship with a man who believes this way? Another example to consider a person may like to be married one day. You have met a man you are very attracted to but he does not believe in marriage. Would you move forward in a relationship with him? Why or Why not? Note: Your expectations are not the same and you cannot change his mind. Many people say that they are Christian but are not submitted to God's law. One good example happens when a man says he is a Christian but then tries to get you to agree to a sexual relationship outside the safety of a good healthy marriage. (1 Thess. 4:3--5, Eph. 5:3, 1 Cor. 10:13, 1 Cor. 6:18)

10. Friendship/Fellowship/Courtship: What does healthy fellowship look like? Hint it does not include sex before marriage. Learn how to do other fun activities that will not separate you from a close relationship with God. What are some good ways to fellowship? (1 Cor. 13, Prov. 18:24)

11. Friends and family: What is his relationship with his family members and friends. Do they have positive things to say about him? What have they told you about his character? Are they believers in Jesus Christ? What have they not said? (Prov. 18:24)

12. Patience: Make sure you are able to remain patient throughout your journey and consider God's timing. You will meet many along this journey you must be able to discern with whom to begin fellowship. (Eccl. 7:8)

13. Contentment when you are content with your life unmarried you have learned the value of the Holy Spirit who is a comforter. The Holy Spirit will lead you into all truth and help you to discern with whom to begin a relationship. (Phil. 4:11--13)

Closing prayer: Dear Heavenly Father Lord I pray that you will continue to bless the lives of all singles in the name of Jesus. That they will continue to seek after you and submit their lives to you as a permanent lifestyle. Lord I pray that you will continue to bless our relationships and fellowships with one another and that they are healthy and a blessing to all in the name of Jesus Christ.

A prayer for singles:

Father in the name of Jesus Christ, I totally dedicate my current and future relationships to you. I will consult and trust you for the mate you created for me. I repent all of my sins and practices that are not pleasing in your sight. I renounce every demonic spirit that crossed my path that kept me from presenting my body as a living sacrifice; I send it back to the pit of hell, in the name of Jesus Christ. I pray that my future relationship and marriage will be blessed and covered with the blood of Jesus. I will dedicate my life this day forward to obey your laws, precepts, and commandments. All past and present attacks from the enemy have been voided and cancelled in the name of Jesus Christ. I renounce all outside ungodly influences over my relationships; All past and present soul ties and cords are broken, All old things and practices are passed away. I decree and declare no weapon from against me shall prosper in the name of Jesus. I come into agreement and bind up all ungodly acquaintances on assignment against my future relationships and against the perfect will of God over my life, in the name of Jesus. I bind sexual perversion, faultfinding, low self-esteem, confusion, distrust, dishonesty, deception, discouragement, division and disloyalty. I loose

love and the perfect will of God over my life, my future spouse, and all God's people in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Triumph Church, "How Do I Know: Payer for Singles" (paper presented at a singles meeting for singles, Southfield, MI, October 13, 2014).

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